

**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 summer outing, an autumn walk 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

The Journal

The journal is published annually. The five articles in this issue, which span three centuries and four continents, 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.

Thomas Turner's Transport Requirements at Caughley

by Neil Clarke

The question is often asked as to why Thomas Turner established his porcelain factory at Caughley, in what is perceived to be such a remote spot. But this is to pose a question from a modern perspective. In 18th century terms, there was nothing unusual in a prospective industrialist choosing such a site; and there are other local examples of this. Abraham Darby I had chosen to establish his ironworks at Coalbrookdale at the beginning of the 18th century, and John Wilkinson joined a partnership to make iron at equally remote Willey a decade or so before Turner came to Caughley. 18th century industrial enterprise, of which these are good examples, depended to a greater or lesser degree on four major factors:

- the availability of raw materials;
- some existing local expertise;
- a supply of water for production purposes and power;
- a means of transport and a market for the product.

Raw materials

From his experience of the china trade in Worcester, where he spent his early life, Turner would have been aware of the large quantities of coal and fireclay exported down the River Severn from the Broseley area. In fact, coal had been mined at Caughley since the 16th century, and we know of its use in an iron smithy at Caughley Wood in the 1590s. During the 17th and early 18th centuries mining increased to supply fuel to ironworks in Broseley and Willey, and by the middle of the 18th century to the newly-established pottery at Caughley.

Local clays had been used to make pots in the Broseley area from the beginning of the 17th century – white clay, the ingredient of the potter; and refractory clay for making the saggars in which the pottery was fired. A mug dated 1634 is the first evidence we have of local pottery production, and mug houses along the River Severn at Jackfield, where this pottery was made, are shown on the early 18th century Broseley Estate map.

So, two of the basic materials needed by Turner – coal and refractory clay – were available in the Caughley area. As John Randall, a local historian with an intimate knowledge of the

ceramics industry, wrote in 1879: *'Caughley was admirably situated for the manufacture of china, from the fact that coal lay about 20 feet from the surface, and clay for saggars at a less depth even'*. But the third, and in fact crucial, raw material that Turner needed for his porcelain – at first, soaprock and later china clay – would have to be obtained elsewhere.

Existing local expertise

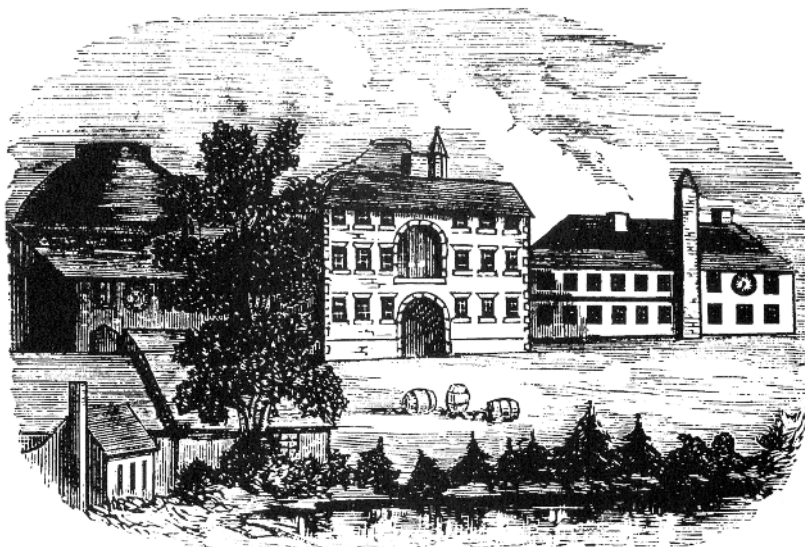
If Turner knew of the availability in this area of suitable raw materials for the manufacture of ceramics, he would probably also have been aware of the existence of small potteries making coarse earthenware, such as those at Benthall and Jackfield; and by about 1770 he is likely to have known about the pottery operating at Caughley. This had been established about 1750 by the landowner Squire Edward Browne, who lived at Caughley Hall. It seems that the Browne family's interest in pottery was one strand in their plans to improve their estate. The pottery was managed by Ambrose Gallimore, a native of the Staffordshire Potteries, who himself took out a lease in 1754 for a term of 62 years. It is likely that this pottery was situated near the Dean Brook, and was later to become Turner's saggar works. It may well have been Gallimore's proposal to progress from pottery to porcelain manufacture and, looking to Worcester to obtain the necessary



Thomas Turner

additional technical expertise, that drew Turner to Caughley in the early 1770s. Together they expanded the existing works with the building of a new factory, which was probably substantially complete by the end of 1774, enabling production to commence the following year.

So, in the same way that Abraham Darby and John Wilkinson had revived earlier enterprises, Thomas Turner joined an existing pottery and, with the addition of further skilled workers,



Caughley China Works

helped to expand it into a manufactory that produced soft-paste porcelain on a commercial scale for the first time in Shropshire.

Water supply

In 18th century pottery and porcelain manufacture, water was needed in the mixing processes and to provide power for grinding materials that were added to the mix. There were streams in the parishes of Barrow and Willey which drained eastwards into the River Severn. At Caughley, the original pottery, which under Turner became a saggar works, was situated near one of these streams, the Dean Brook, an obvious source of water; and the new porcelain factory was near a tributary of the Dean Brook, which was later dammed to provide two reservoir pools. In 1782, two mills on the Linley Brook, some two miles south of the porcelain works, were leased from the Forester estate. They were described as *'that water corn mill called Smithies Mill also that other mill used for the purpose of grinding materials for the use of the porcelain manufactory at Caughley'*. Porcelain wasters and broken pieces were ground to produce a grog to be incorporated in future mixes, reducing firing shrinkages.

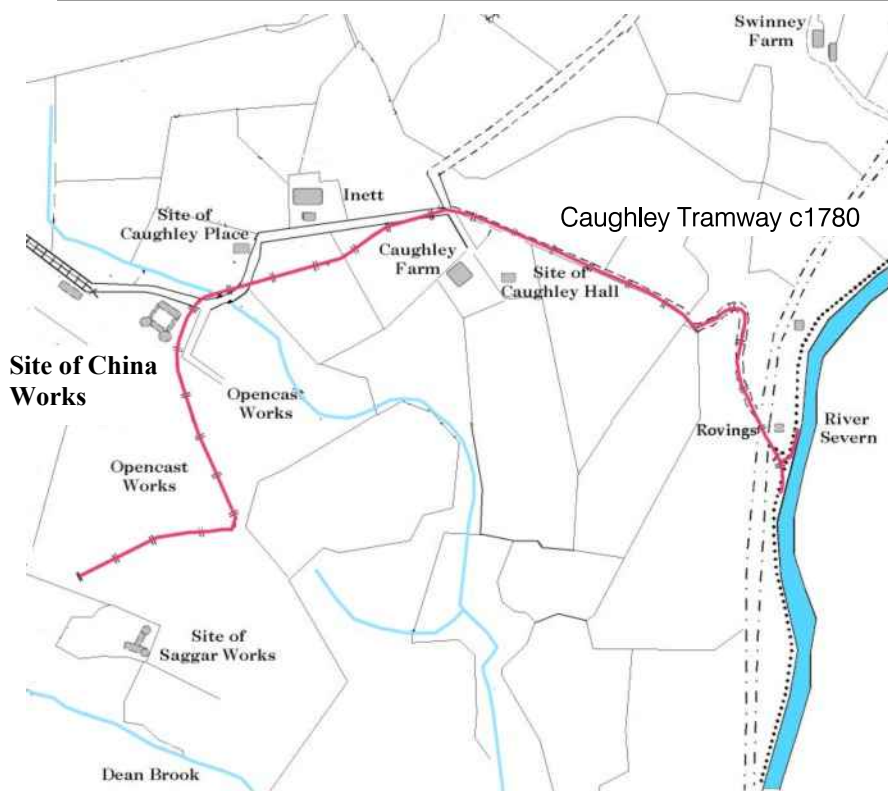
So, Turner used the water provided by local streams for the mixing processes at the saggar works and the porcelain manufactory, and also used water to power his grog mills on the Linley Brook.

Transport

Whatever the industry, raw materials had to be carried to the place of manufacture and finished goods had to be conveyed to their markets. At Caughley, Turner would have continued to use the transport infrastructure already in place serving the pottery – that is, packhorses, carts and a wooden wagonway; but for his long-distant transport requirements he would become more reliant on stage-wagons and the River Severn

Where carts could not be employed because of poor trackways, packhorses would have been used to carry clay and coal to the works at Caughley and finished goods to local customers and markets. Where even packhorses were not suitable because of the risk of breakages, it has been suggested that some of the finished fragile pieces were hand-carried. Gaye Blake-Roberts, in her introduction to the 2005 Caughley Exhibition Catalogue, said: *'At Caughley the finished fragile pieces had to be hand carried or travel in wagons from the manufactory down to the River Severn'*. And an article in the Shropshire Magazine some 60 years ago, referring to the cottage which survived at Caughley, went one step further: *'No wonder romance lingers by this remote old cottage at Caughley, where 200 years ago Shropshire women workers could be seen carrying on their heads baskets of pottery down the hillside to the waiting barges on the Severn'*. The practice of carrying goods on the head was certainly was in use during the late 18th and 19th centuries in a number of industries.

The main link to the river, however, was a railway. Railways had been employed in the Ironbridge Gorge area from the early 17th century onwards, carrying coal from local mines down to wharves on the river bank for markets downstream. The first of these railways, recorded in 1605, ran from Broseley to the Calcutts at Jackfield. These primitive railways were in fact wooden wagonways, where the rails were made of wood and the wooden wagons on them were pulled by horses or pushed by men. The early 18th century Broseley Hall estate map shows the riverside terminus of one of these railways at the Calcutts; and remarkably one of the wooden wagon wheels used on such wagons has



Map showing route of tramway from coal mines near the Sagger Works past the China works to the wharf on the Severn at the Rovings.

survived, found in a pit at Caughley – it has a diameter of 9½ inches. Just to the north of the Caughley site, one of these railways ran the three miles from John Wilkinson's New Willey furnace down Tarbatch Dingle to the river at Willey Wharf; and Thomas Turner either made use of an existing railway, or built one, from Caughley one mile to the River Severn at the Rovings. Such a railway is shown on the 1780 Caughley estate map and there is a reference in 1792 to 'the wharf near the Roving in the parish of Barrow called Brown's Wharf'. By the time of Turner's last decade at Caughley, this railway had probably become iron plated, following the practice introduced at Coalbrookdale in 1767 of iron top rails being placed on bottom wooden rails. John Randall remembered as a boy seeing these iron rails on wooden under-rails still being used on lines in the Caughley

area – and this was at the time that the remains of the Caughley factory site were being dismantled around 1820.

The railway and wharf provided Thomas Turner with the ability to transport from the river to his factory the most important constituent of his porcelain. This was soaprock from Cornwall in the first 20 years or so of Caughley, and then, later, supplies of china clay from Wedgwood. From the factory to the wharf, the railway carried finished goods intended for markets both up and down stream, and also pieces for decoration at Worcester. Randall referred to this traffic when he was commenting on the availability of coal and clay at Caughley: *'At the same time'* he says, *'there was a navigable river with barges passing up and down, these at all hours of the day, to bring other materials, or to carry goods to distant towns and cities. Much of the ware in 1788'*, he continues, *'and also at a later period, was conveyed by barge to Worcester to be decorated by Mr Robert Chamberlain, when he first commissioned business, and by Mr Grainger, at their respective works'*.

River Severn

The Severn played an important role in the development of Caughley. The river had been the county's main transport artery for centuries. Wroxeter was connected to other parts of Roman Britain not only by Watling Street but also by the River Severn. Shrewsbury's growth as a wool trading centre in the Middle Ages depended on its position on the river. And the provision of water transport on the Severn was crucial to the industrial developments that took place in the Ironbridge Gorge area in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Local raw materials and finished goods and imported merchandise from the port of Bristol were carried in the large number of vessels plying up and down the river. An idea of the extent of this traffic is given in a survey taken of the number of owners and their vessels on the river, which was printed in the Gentlemen's Magazine in 1758, indicating a concentration of vessels belonging to this area. But river transport did have its limitations. Weather conditions affected sailing, particularly wet weather leading to floods; and shallows and fords impeded navigation. Sailing downstream with the current was easier than struggling upstream, when the use of sails had to be supplemented by haulage by gangs of men known as bow haulers. A horse-towing path was not completed through the Gorge until 1800.

So, it's against this background that Thomas Turner's use of the River Severn needs to be considered. Turner, from his knowledge of soft-paste porcelain while at Worcester, realised he needed to secure regular supplies of soaprock from Cornwall. For its first year or so of operation, Caughley appears to have obtained soaprock from an independent supplier, Thomas Trounson, at Meaver Vean in the Lizard peninsula; and then, in spite of obstructive tactics from the Worcester factory, who feared competition, Turner and Gallimore secured a 14-year licence to extract soaprock from Gewgraze mine, which in fact they may have been allowed to use from 1776. When this supply began to run out, a second licence to mine soaprock was obtained by Turner in 1792, this time at Predannock Wollas.

After it had been dug out and graded, soaprock was placed in barrels for shipment. In the early days of the industry, the stone was shipped from Hayle, Helford and Falmouth, and was later transferred by sea from Mullion to Penzance or Mounts Bay. Barrels destined for Worcester or Caughley would have been taken by coastal vessels for transshipment at Bristol or possibly Gloucester to Severn barges or trows. Whether Caughley-bound soaprock was further transhipped at Stourport or came direct up the Severn to the Rovings, is not known. For although we do have records of local barges and bargemen who worked on the river at this period, we have no specific references to this particular trade in soaprock.

Clearly Cornwall was the main source of the soaprock used for soft-paste porcelain manufactured at Caughley; but it seems that there was a supply closer to the factory, which Turner used at some time – whether in those very early years in the mid-1770s or in the later period of the early 1790s. The evidence for this comes from '*A General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire*', by Archdeacon Joseph Plymley, which was published at the very beginning of the 19th century. In his preface, dated 25 May 1801, Plymley, while discussing minerals in the Cardington area of south Shropshire suitable for the manufacture of porcelain, says '*there is a steatite clay there which was long used in the Caughley china-works, at a considerable expense of land carriage*'. In fact, transporting steatite clay the 20 miles or so by wagon from south Shropshire to Caughley, in the late 18th century, although difficult and costly, would certainly have been possible using roads that had recently been improved by turnpike trusts. It was accessing and exiting

these roads at each end of the journey that would have presented the greatest difficulty.

Whatever the case, when supplies of soaprock became unreliable and Caughley began making some hard-paste and hybrid porcelain from about 1795, Turner needed supplies of Cornish china clay. He seems to have obtained this, or most of it, from Wedgwood's, for ledger entries at Etruria covering the years 1795 to 1798 show that Turner purchased 68¼ tons of china clay during that period. Wedgwood's would have obtained casks or barrels of china clay by sea from Cornwall to Liverpool and from there by the Bridgewater and Trent & Mersey Canals to their manufactory at Etruria; and it is assumed that Turner would have arranged for the clay for Caughley to have then been transported from Etruria by canal and river – that is, by the Trent & Mersey Canal to Great Heywood and the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal to Stourport; and then, following transshipment, by barge up the River Severn to the wharf at the Rovings below Caughley. On the other hand, the reference in the Wedgwood ledger to clay being forwarded to Turner by William Greaves, a Bristol china dealer, begs the question as to whether the clay from Wedgwood's might have come directly from their supplies in Cornwall to Caughley, via Bristol and the River Severn.

So much for the inward flow of raw materials; the use of the River Severn for outward goods was also extensive. The carriage of undecorated Caughley ware to Chamberlains at Worcester from 1788 (and possibly earlier) was mentioned by Randall. From the wharf at the Rovings, pieces of Caughley porcelain were sent to destined markets upstream to Shrewsbury and downstream to either Stourport for transshipment onto the national canal network or Bristol for shipping to London or overseas. In addition to receiving goods from Caughley by river, the warehouse at Bridgnorth, opened in 1775 by Robert Hancock, who like Turner had moved from Worcester - this warehouse might well have received some pieces of Caughley porcelain by wagon from the factory along six miles of turnpike road to Bridgnorth. Equally, some goods destined for the London warehouse in Portugal Street, opened in 1781, having reached Stourport by river might well have travelled by either canal or wagon from there. We know that Chamberlain's of Worcester sent china to London for Turner by 'Smith's Waggon' in August 1789 and by 'West's wagon' in April 1790. Caughley

porcelain is also known to have been sent overseas, presumably from Bristol or London, to Holland, Spain and America.

Great care was needed in the way pieces of fragile porcelain were packed and transported, whether this was to where they were to be decorated or where they were to be stored prior to sale. Generally, porcelain would have been packed in caskets or barrels, sometimes boxes, protected by straw or paper. Chamberlain's were constantly complaining about items they received from Caughley which were badly packed and damaged in transit. Clearly, as we saw earlier, the first stage of their journey, from the works to the river, was the most hazardous, but the loading on and off the vessels also had to be carefully supervised. Although we know the names of many of the bargemen who worked on the river, we don't have details of any who carried Caughley china. One possibility is the bargeman Francis Benbow: his name was inscribed on a Caughley mug of 1776; he was later a publican at the riverside inn at the Rovings; and when he went bankrupt in 1796 he was working the 80 ton tow *Betsey*. Exactly what provision was made at the Rovings wharf to receive and despatch assignments of Caughley porcelain, again we do not know. But certainly Turner was not happy about an incident which occurred there in the summer of 1792. His advertisement in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* on 5th October said:

'Lost two months ago from the wharf near the Roving in the parish of Barrow called Brown's Wharf, a cask of porcelain or china of considerable value, blue, gilded and enamelled teasetts, etc., supposed dropped into the river by a malicious person or persons. Reward for finding, or for information, from Salopian Porcelain Manufactory'.

John Rose

Presumably, the transport arrangements in place under Turner continued when John Rose took over Caughley in 1799. Obviously, Rose's new works at Coalport, making hard-paste china, had the advantage of a better location: for receiving supplies of china clay and despatching consignments of china, it was adjacent to the river; and for supplies of coal and clay for saggars, it was on the banks of the newly opened Shropshire Canal, which carried these raw materials from local mines to Coalport. It would seem that contact between the works at Coalport and Caughley, although



John Rose

possible by river, was more likely to have been over Preens Eddy bridge. Twenty years earlier, Rose's partner Edward Blakeway, together with ironmaster John Wilkinson and other local businessmen, had promoted the building of this bridge. It was at first made of wood, but was rebuilt after the Great Flood of 1795 and reopened in 1799. Traffic between Coalport and Caughley, using the bridge, would have travelled either by Broseley and Pound Lane or perhaps

more directly via Swinbatch. However, the joint operation of the two sites came to an end after 15 years: with the Caughley lease having only two years to run, and following his acquisition of the premises of the neighbouring Anstice, Horton & Thomas Rose at Coalport, John Rose concentrated his manufacturing at Coalport and closed Caughley in 1814.

Conclusion

So, like many other 18th century industrial sites, Caughley under Turner inherited some advantageous features. Caughley had supplies of coal and refractory clay, and an existing works with some local expertise. But, like other sites, there were some factors which had to be developed further. In Caughley's case, this was the need for a larger manufactory with newer techniques, and improved transport facilities to handle essential long-distance raw materials and to supply expanding markets. Caughley's access to the River Severn proved crucial to its success. But local competition, using newer techniques and better transport facilities, eventually led to Caughley's demise.

(I would like to express my thanks to Roger Edmundson for the information he provided in his article 'The Salopian Porcelain Manufactory at Caughley: a history based on contemporary documents', Northern Ceramics Journal, Vol.29, 2013.)

Robert Scipio de Ricci, 1852-1912

By Janet Doody

I discovered this tombstone in Broseley Cemetery and was intrigued by the rather exotic name. Just who was the Rev. Robert Scipio de Ricci?

Robert Scipio Marsh de Ricci, to give him his full title, was born about 1852 in Dublin, Ireland to Herman Robert and Fanny de Ricci. Herman had been born in 1824 in Italy, a British Subject and a physician, whilst Fanny was Dublin born. Herman's mother, Lady Jane Diana de Ricci, was the daughter of Robert King, the 2nd Earl of Kingston of Mitchelstown, County Cork.

There appears to be no evidence of the de Ricci family in England before the 1870s, but on 13th June 1874 a Lieutenant Robert Scipio M. de Ricci resigned his commission in the Militia. Then, in 1876, Robert was appointed Assistant Commissioner to the Ordnance Store Department; but by 1880 he was "retired under article 59 of the Royal Warrant on the re-organisation of the Department".

He next appears in the 1881 census as a lodger in St. Pancras at the age of 30 when he was a law student; while his parents had



The Rev Robert Scipio, de Ricci

moved to Molesey House in East Molesey, Surrey. This same year, Robert Scipio de Ricci of the University of Dublin was called to the Bar by the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn.

Robert's life up to this date seems unsettled, until finally he attends St. Bees Theological College in Cumbria. *The Times* of the 22nd December 1887 reported that Robert Scipio Marsh de Ricci

went from St. Bees College to be a curate at Harwich, and then from 1888 to 1890 he was at St. Michael's in St. Albans. During March of 1888 Robert travelled to South Africa to assist in the marriage of his sister Jane Diana to Commander Charles Kennedy-Purvis RN, HMS Flora, at St. George's Cathedral, Cape Town. In 1889 Robert married Ellen Georgina Thornhill (died 28th January 1951) at Cookham, Berkshire. From 1890 to 1893 he was curate at Hampton Hill, Middlesex, and then he moved to St. Marks, Woodside, Wimbledon. On 19th November 1910 *the Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News* reported the appointment of the new Rector of Jackfield, the Rev. R. de Ricci, who had previously been the curate at the Abbey Church, Waltham.

Unfortunately, Robert only lived another two years and died at the Rectory in September 1912. At the inquest, a verdict of death due to heart failure was given by Dr Fox Edwards and this was supported by the jury. On the day of the funeral, the newspaper reported that it took place "amid every manifestation of sorrow. Every house in the village had drawn blinds and at the Tumbling Sailors the Union Jack floated at half-mast".

Perhaps Robert had felt his vocation amongst the clergy as a young man, but his family were against this calling. Then finally, having



The Yeomanry held its annual training camp at Walcot Park, Lydbury North, on the estate of the Clive family.



Tombstone of Robert Scipio de Ricci in Broseley Cemetery

achieved his aim whilst in his late 30s, he married Ellen and was eventually appointed Rector of Jackfield where he was happy, being “an excellent preacher” and “very popular with his parishioners”. Or am I just being sentimental?

The de Ricci family

Herman Robert and Fanny de Ricci had at least four other children: James Herman, Frances Helena, Jane Diana and Louisa Caroline. James Herman, born 1847 in Mitchelstown, Ireland, was a barrister at law. He first married Ranee Mary Percy-Smith in 1872 (died 1st April 1876 in Leonka, Fiji) and had one son, Percy Scipio Richard Shuldharn de Ricci, who died aged 12 in 1885. In August 1880, he married Helen Amelie Montfort (died 1st April 1932) at the British Embassy in Paris. They had four children: Seymour Montefiore Robert Rossa de Ricci (1888 –1942), Alice Diane F. C. de Ricci (born 1884), Marie Frances E. (born 1886), and Edward Raoul (born 1890). Helen divorced him in 1890; she was awarded custody of their children and moved to France. Seymour de Ricci became well known in academic circles as a bibliographer, art historian, collector and a specialist of Merovingian tapestries.

Robert’s brother, Lt. James H. de Ricci resigned his commission in the Cavan Militia in 1873, probably to concentrate on a government career in the Foreign Office. In 1875, he was appointed Attorney General for the Colony of Fiji and then, in October 1876, as substitute Procurer & Advocate General for the Island of Mauritius. He had also been president of the Legislative Council of the Bahamas. In 1882 he became the prospective conservative

candidate for Bedford. *The Times* newspaper report of 17th October 1885, presumably from the hustings, where he was supporting a fellow Conservative candidate, is worth repeating:

Middlesex - Last evening Mr. Coope, the conservative candidate for the Brentford division, attended one of the most disorderly political meetings that has ever taken place in the neighbourhood. The conduct of a portion of the audience was of a very disgraceful character and there were several fights during the evening. An attempt was made to storm the platform and Mr. de Ricci, the conservative candidate for Bedford, had a tussle with one of the principal ringleaders. Other prominent conservatives present joined in the fray. A resolution approving Mr Coope's candidature was submitted amid the greatest disorder and declared to be carried. The meeting broke up in utter confusion. [Octavius Coope was a member of the Ind Coope brewing family.]

James de Ricci was not successful in becoming an MP. He went into print in 1888 with a snappily entitled book 'The Fisheries Dispute & Annexation of Canada', which concerned a number of legal issues.

Of Robert's three sisters, Frances Helena was born in 1849 in Florence, Italy and was married originally to John Shuldham of Moigh, Ireland. In 1892, she married Sir George Errington of Lackham, Chippenham at the British Embassy in Paris. Lady Errington died aged 83, on 6th November 1932, whilst living at 8 Royal Crescent, Bath. Jane Diana (1857-18th November 1927) was married to Commander Charles Kennedy-Purvis in South Africa by her brother Robert. Louisa Caroline Croften Buchanan de Ricci was born in 1864 in Dublin (died 14th January 1944) and married Richard Hobart Morrison in 1889 at St. Augustine's Chapel, Queen's Gate. They had a son, Charles Colquhoun Morrison (born 1893).

The Street Names of Broseley

By Steve Dewhirst

The first reference to the street names is on a series of maps produced in the 1600s showing the Broseley estate. On these maps the layout of the town is very much as the present conservation area; however, most streets are not named. A map of 1602 shows Rough Lane, presumably named after the state of the road surface. This continued as the now lost Riddings Lane, which lead to Riddings Farm, and presumably it became redundant when the turnpike road to the Coalport Bridge was constructed. The road leading to Caughley from the church was known as Lampas Lane. Lampas is a luxury crepe fabric or a condition suffered by horses, neither of which seems a likely source of the name; perhaps it actually refers to a lamp. Hatch Lane was the road leading from the Bridgnorth Road to Barrow. Cockshutt Lane is named on a map from 1686, and the name is said to have been derived from cockshoot, which was a broad opening in a wood where woodcock



Broseley Wood in 1686. Only Cockshutt Lane is named but the street layout is the same as today. (from Nuffield Report Jackfile page



Wilf Lloyd Robert Perks and Arthur Beddow in 1972 looking somewhat confused after the other end of the road was named Cockshot. (Shropshire Star)

would be shot. Originally the lane ran from Duke Street past the Stocking Mound to Ball's Lane. When the new estate was built in the 1970s, it was extended to Dark Lane, the nameplate at this junction had a different spelling which has now been corrected. The spelling 'Cockshot' does however agree with the OS map of the time, so it is hardly surprising the officials got it wrong. Clench Acre is also shown, and this may refer to an acre of land which does not have direct access, hence is it clenched or locked in. The final road shown on a map from 1658 is White Hill, which is now known as Benthall Hill.

Naming and Numbering

The naming of the other streets probably dates from the expansion of the town in the mid 18th century. The first detailed list occurs in the 1841 census, but even here large parts of Broseley Wood did not have street names. A number of road names mentioned in the census have now been lost. Cherry Tree Hill was between Ladywood and Barnett's Leasow (by the Free Bridge). Nearby were Mathew's Lane and Copy Gate. At Jackfield, between Coalford and Lloyds Head, was Holly Grove, which would have been near the brick works of the same name. Near Lloyds Head was Hollow Way, and the Jackfield Rails ran past the present tile museum. Other parts of the area were just called Jackfield by the enumerator.

It was the census and not the Post Office which led to streets being formally named and having name plates.¹ On 8th February 1871, Eddowes Salopian Journal published a circular from the Registrar General:

*'Under the Census Act the people in every city, town, and district, will be enumerated in one day—April 3rd next--by enumerators acting under the instructions from this office, carried out by the superintendent-registrars of births and deaths- I have to request your assistance in this great undertaking, of so much importance in various ways to the town over which you preside- It will contribute to the success of the Census if you will in the Town Council, some time before April 3rd, point out its importance to the town, and call upon the inhabitants to lend all the help they can. Your community will be enumerated in districts framed for the convenience of enumeration, and in connection with local boundaries- And it will be very useful to get these districts laid down distinctly on the best local map, by the town surveyor, or some other competent officer, after consultation with the superintendent-registrar and the registrars. The houses—inhabited, uninhabited, and buildings—will also be taken in their several streets and roads, each house being described by its name or number- In some places where the authorities are vigilant, the houses are numbered and distinguished on well considered plans. But this is not always so; for in certain places, streets and courts are not named at all, or are named imperfectly, and the houses are not numbered. The Local Government Act enacted that the authorities shall cause all streets to be named, and the houses to be numbered. I trust that, seeing the importance of action in the matter, the Town Council will forthwith take steps, where it is not already done, to name the streets or roads, and to number every dwelling-house under its jurisdiction. Experience has shown that any expense incurred in affixing names on the streets, and numbers on the houses of towns, is repaid by their public convenience and by the facility they afford for designating houses in legal and other documents. I venture to submit an outline of some suggestions as to systems of naming streets and numbering houses, in the hope that they may be useful in showing what is the practice recommended in towns and places under the ablest administrators. I rely on the valuable co-operation of the body over which you preside'.*²

Towns such as Welshpool had erected street name signs as early as 1859, but Broseley seems to have completely ignored the request and the Local Government Act. Ten years later, nothing having been done, the census office wrote to the council on the same matter and they finally instructed the surveyor to take action at once, which was proceeded with.³ It is reasonable to assume that the cast iron name plates still to be seen date from this time.

It was in the 18th century that the first numbering schemes were introduced in Europe, with London starting in 1708. Initially it was common to number houses sequentially along one side of the road and then back down the other side. The practice of having odd and even numbers is said to have originated in France and became the norm in the mid 19th century. As might be expected it took some time for Broseley to implement a scheme, and the matter had still not been full resolved as shown in the council proceedings in 1908:

*Mr. T. Jones (assistant overseer) asked the Council if they could do something with respect to the numbering of the houses. He had to meet the Revising Barrister, and would like to be able to tell him something. - The Clerk said it was the duty of the Council to name the streets, and to decide what numbers they should put on the houses. After that they should give the occupiers notice to put them on their own doors. - In reply to Mr. Doughty, the Clerk said it was a tenant's mater. If the occupiers refused to do the work the Authority could do it and charge the tenant with the expense. Unless the houses were named or numbered before the next Revision Court, the Barrister would strike the voters off the list. - A sub-committee was appointed to go into the matter.*⁴

When this was resolved is not clear, as the council were still considering the matter a year later!⁵ King Street shows the problems which occur when a scheme is not thought through. The houses were numbered starting at the Quarry Road end disregarding even odd convention, so 2,3,4,5 etc. are next to each other on the same side of the road and the final house on the street is 58. This was fine until council houses were built over a period of years. These were numbered as they were built without any regard to the geographical location. So 59 and 59a are opposite 20. In the next group built, 61 is opposite 5. Then to make it even more confusing, King Street was extended at its junction with Woodlands



Road and the same ad hoc scheme of numbering continued with numbers 69 to 93. This must make it very difficult for the postman!

Other Street Names

Foundry Lane runs between Church Street and Bridgnorth Road. This was the site of the John Onions foundry and is probably where the castings for the Coalport Bridge were made. There were two sites either side of the road where it joins Bridgnorth Road, one of which also had a steam operated flour mill. It was still operating as a foundry in the late 1800s, but probably closed by the end of the century. Modern council houses have been built on the site. Bridgnorth Road was constructed in 1784 as part of turnpike road improvements. It, or the nearby area, was called Firefield Road, in the 1861 census, after the nearby Fiery Fields, where in the 18th century methane was escaping from the ground and could be lit. The first record of it being called Bridgnorth Road was in 1877; however, the local Council was still calling it New Road in 1949, and many locals still use this name.⁶

Delph Side runs beside the Memorial Green, which is on the site of the delph. Delph is the name for a quarry or pit and may be a small opencast coal mine. The coal in this part of Broseley lies at a shallow depth and a thin seam can still be seen in the cellar of The Pheasant pub. In 1793 we have a mention of the Delph where Francis Bradley had "an old Thatched House and small Garden near the Delph"; and it was filled with water in 1803.⁷ By the mid 19th century, the Delph had become "a stagnant filthy pool, which has long been a public nuisance"; and 1861, at the instigation of George Pritchard, it was filled in.⁸ It later became the bowling green for the Victoria Institute with the opening of the Victoria Hall in 1905; and the War Memorial was erected in 1921, by which time it had been converted into gardens. Dark Lane is a descriptive name common in many towns. Until the mid 20th century this was a narrow lane with overhanging trees, and it must have been particularly dark in the cutting near the junction with Ironbridge Road.

The origin of the area called Hockley is not clear; however, it is said to derive from an Anglo Saxon word meaning mound or hill. Between Hockley and Harris's Green is Mill Lane. This gets its name from the two windmills which were near Harris's Green; the stump of one mill can still be seen from the lane. In 1776 the mills were owned by Leonard Jennings and the area was called Syner's Hill, perhaps after Thomas Syner who lived nearby in 1658.⁹ There is reference to a Windmill-street in 1869 and this may refer to the same road.¹⁰ Woodhouse Road runs parallel to Mill Lane and is an example of 20th century gentrification. Its previous name was Workhouse Road, although the workhouse was actually located on Harris's Green between Workhouse Road and Mill Lane. The workhouse was built in the 1730s, closing over a century later when Broseley joined with Madeley and the new Beaches workhouse was built above Ironbridge.

Names such as Barratt's Hill and Simpson's Lane are amongst a number of streets named after individuals, but unfortunately who these people were has not been recorded. It seems likely that Legge's Hill in Broseley Wood is named after the Legge family who lived and made pipes in the area. Harris's Green was named Harrison's Green on the Tithe map, but this was probably an error. Ball's Lane is possibly named after Benjamin Ball, who at one time managed the Barnett's Leasow Furnaces located near its junction with Ironbridge Road. Before Ironbridge Road was built, this lane continued in a straight line to the river by the Free Bridge. When Ironbridge Road was built, this section became a footpath which is still in use, although it is in a poor state of repair.

The principal streets of Broseley Wood existed as early as 1620 and are shown in some detail on a map of 1686.¹¹ The naming of Cape Street, King Street, Queen Street and Duke Street must have come some time later as at least three of these are named after pubs: Cape Street after the now demolished Cape of Good Hope, a three storey building which stood at the junction of Cape Street and High Street; King Street after the Kings Head; and Duke Street after the Duke of Cumberland, which stood at the junction of Duke and King Streets.¹² Other streets named after pubs are Swan Street, Fox Lane and possibly Sycamore Lane. Maypole Road is also probably named after the Maypole Inn which dates from at least 1813.¹³ The present Maypole Green appears to have been a spoil heap for a mine, and the actual site of the old maypole was



The Cape of Good Hope stood at the corner of Cape Street and High Street. Although it gave its name to Cape Street the entrance was actually on High Street

probably on Maypole Meadow, which was a field to the South. Until the 1820s, bulls were baited here and in 1879 John Randall recalled there being a Maypole, but he did not remember dancing.¹⁴ Today,

Maypole Meadow is covered with housing; the present green was still shown as waste land on the 1927 OS map, suggesting it was landscaped some time later. The pole which now stands on the green was not erected until the 1990s. Also in Broseley Wood we have the names Woodlands Green and Woodlands Road for the same road. The original nameplate for Woodlands Green is still attached to No.14, and mid 20th century maps still show this name, so it is not clear why it was changed. The

name originally referred to a small field called Wood Lands, which sat between Woodlands Road and Maypole Road. In the 1970s an estate of bungalows was built on this field and the road was appropriately called Woodlands Close.

In Jackfield, the houses were numbered sequentially, starting at 'No.1 Jackfield' by the Iron Bridge, so as far as the Council were concerned street names did not exist or were not relevant. Names in use today, such as Coalford and Lloyds Head (after the Lloyd family), are associated with the river. Salthouse Road comes from

a building which either stored salt or was where brine was evaporated to produce salt. Ferry Road gets its name from the Coalport ferry, which was mainly used by workers to get to the Coalport China Works. The memorial bridge now stands at the site of the ferry.

Bridge Road or Bank was built as a turnpike road to link the Iron Bridge with the Wenlock-Broseley turnpike. Likewise Coalport Road was built to link Broseley to the Coalport Bridge. Both of these were new roads which incorporated parts of older lanes. Ironbridge Road was, however, a relatively new development being constructed in 1828 as a way of employing the men being supported by the poor rate. On completion it was taken over by the trustees of the Iron Bridge, who charged tolls until the building of the Free Bridge in 1909, long after tolls had been removed on other roads.¹⁵

In Benthall, Spout Lane is named after the Mine Spout. This is a natural spring used by locals as a supply of water before a piped public supply was available. The present pipe from which the water flows was erected in the 1880s by George Maw. This was done in order to measure the flow of water and ascertain if it was enough to use it to supply the town.¹⁶ The scheme came to nothing, but the pipe was left in place. The Mines clearly refers to the adjacent shallow coal mines which peppered the whole of that part of Benthall. Floyer Lane is named after Floyer Hall, which was a mission room and Sunday school associated with Benthall Church and is now a private house. However, this is a modern name dating from 1948, when it was given to the parish by Mrs C. Benthall and named after her husband.¹⁷

Some Modern Developments

After the war there were a number of housing schemes undertaken by both the Council and private developers. The estate off King Street is locally called 'The Wimpey's', presumably after the builder. It was built around the time of the coronation and the streets were given suitably patriotic names: Windsor Crescent, Elizabeth Crescent and Edinburgh Road. Other local authority developments included Wilkinson Avenue, located to the south of the Lawns (John Wilkinson's Broseley House), and Jackson Avenue off the High Street. The latter was named after a local vicar, but exhibits another of the apparently illogical numbering conventions devised

by the Council. The development comprises bungalows on a road off the High Street as well as some along it. For some reason the ones along the High Street still have a postal address of Jackson Avenue, the Council having to erect special road signs presumably in an attempt to avoid confusion.

Names on the private Tileries estate also have a local connection: Guest Road after John Guest, the famous ironmaster whose descendants went on to form the engineering firm GKN; Prestage Close after Donald Prestage, the owner of Millburgh and later Broseley tileries, who was also a local councillor and benefactor; Collins Close after a local doctor; Blakeway Close after Edward Blakeway of Broseley Hall, a potter and financier who was the brother-in-law of John Wilkinson: and finally Forester Road after Lord Forester.

Footnotes:

¹ Pigot's Directory of Shropshire, 1828. Letters were dispatched by horse to Shifnal at 3:45 in the morning to catch the mail coach and incoming post arrived from Shifnal at half-past four in the afternoon. Letters were just addressed to Broseley and it seems to have been the job of the local Post Office and postman to ascertain where people lived

² Eddowes Salopian Journal , 23rd February 1871

³ Wenlock Advertiser, 19th February 1881

⁴ Wellington Journal, 10 October 1908. Revising Barristers were appointed by senior judges to hold courts which sat from mid-September to the end of October, to revise the lists of voters.

⁵ Wellington Journal , 9th January 1909

⁶ Wellington Journal, 7th January 1949. Broseley District Committee regarding the new houses.

⁷ Valuation of Broseley Estate. Valentine Vickers Ledgers 2 and 3. Shropshire Archives 515/2

⁸ Wellington Journal, 1861.

⁹ Victoria County History of Shropshire, Volume 10. The Landscape of Industry. Judith Alfrey and Catharine Clarke. Routledge 1993. Plott for the Boundries of the Commona in Broseley c. 1658

¹⁰ Wellington Journal, 27th November 1869

¹¹ A survey of Serveral Lands in the Lordship of Broseley, 1686.

¹² The dukedom of Cumberland dates from 1644, but the pub probably takes its name from Prince William who put down the Jacobite Rising at Culloden in 1746

¹³ Inns Ale Houses of Broseley and District. B. D. Shinton, 1993

¹⁴ Broseley and its Surroundings, J. Randall, 1879.

¹⁵ Victoria County History of Shropshire, Volume 10

¹⁶ Wellington Journal, 1880, 1881.

¹⁷ Victoria County History of Shropshire, Volume 10

John Wilkinson, junior (1806-71)

by Neil Clarke

With the daughter from his first marriage predeceasing him and no further issue from his second marriage, the ironmaster John Wilkinson had no legitimate heirs. However, in his seventies he fathered three children with his housekeeper at Brymbo Hall, Wrexham, the son being named after him. This article pulls together the various strands that exist about the life of the junior John Wilkinson. The first thirty years of his life, which he spent in this country, was researched by the late W.H. Chaloner of Manchester University; and the first section below is an edited version of the unpublished notes he made. ¹ The account of John's life in America is compiled mostly from information supplied by Samantha Hogate, a Wilkinson/Priestley descendant. ²

Early life (Britain)

John Wilkinson, junior, born 'at half past 8 o'clock in the morning of 8th October 1806'³ was the illegitimate son of the ironmaster John Wilkinson by his mistress Ann Lewis. After the death of old Mrs Wilkinson late in 1806, a warrant was obtained under George III's royal sign manual to enable John Lewis (as he then was) and his two illegitimate sisters to take the name Wilkinson.⁴ In 1808, the College of Heralds made a grant of arms to the three children.⁵

John junior may possibly have been the 'John Wilkinson, gent.', who was living at Greenbank in the township of Upper Holker, Cartmel parish, Furness, when E. Baines and W. Parson were compiling their *History, Directory and Gazetteer of Lancaster*, published in 1824.⁶ He matriculated pensioner at Cambridge in November 1825,⁷ and appears in the Butlers Book (but not in the Admissions Book) of Christ's College as admitted 11 June 1825. He kept one term only and his name was removed in July 1826.⁸ His later ruinous addiction to horse racing may have been fostered there, as the popular tutor of Christ's College from 1815 to 1828, Joseph Shaw, 'was generally to be seen at Newmarket on racing days, and many of his pupils followed him there'.⁹

In 1828, the Trustees of the Wilkinson Estate paid John junior £700 to purchase a commission in the Army and to pay sundry debts. Shortly afterwards, he was arrested for debt in London and detained at the offices of the under sheriff.¹⁰ He operated the

parental works, Brymbo furnaces, from 1829 to 1837 and was described as 'ironmaster'.¹¹ While there, he lived at Brymbo Hall with his two married sisters, Mrs Johnina Murray, who died there in 1835, and Mrs Mary Ann Legh, who died at Bebington in Cheshire in 1838, the year after his flight to the U.S.A.

The following anecdote is told of the events leading to his flight to America in 1837:

*He was greatly interested in horse racing and gambling, and at Chester Races he lost heavily in his betting on a certain horse, coming home that night from Chester on horseback like a madman. The next morning he came down to the works early, took all the cash that was in the office...left the place and never returned.*¹²

He was adjudicated bankrupt in 1840 in the Liverpool District Court of Bankruptcy.¹³

Later life (America)

Although John junior did not possess the business acumen of his father, he sought his fortune in the New World and carved out for himself a successful livelihood there.

He arrived in America at New Orleans, and sailed up the Mississippi river into Illinois, where he at first settled at Sugar Grove in Menard County. In September 1838, he married Sarah Goble and for twenty years the couple managed a stock farm, supplying cattle and hogs to local markets. In 1858, John purchased land in nearby Greenview and built a hotel, to which was attached a livery stable. He died on New Year's Day, 1871, aged 64.¹⁴ He was described in a local publication in 1874 in the following terms:

*Success attended him in all his business enterprises, and he formed a valued member of the community...He was a man of liberal views (a firm adherent of the Democratic party), of habits of industry, of sound and extensive information, with intelligent opinions concerning the questions of the day.*¹⁵

Of his eleven children, the second eldest, Frederick (born in 1840), became a prominent figure in Menard County.¹⁶ Of particular interest to the Wilkinson saga is the visit made by Frederick to Britain some four years after his father's death. The Wrexham Advertiser of 6 May 1876 published this report of his visit:

YANKIE NOTIONS OF THE OLD COUNTRY

The Menard County Times, published at Petersburg, Menard County, Illinois, has the following: 'Sheriff Fred Wilkinson, who left here about last October on a visit to his former home in England, returned on Saturday to this place. He left Liverpool on the 8th and arrived in New York on the 21st, having a safe voyage. Mr Wilkinson travelled over England extensively during the five months he was there and reports very dull there. The country seems to have agreed with him very much as he has increased twenty pounds and looks robust and healthy. No doubt his many friends are pleased to see him back again'.

It seems Sheriff Wilkinson thrived on our dullness and grew fat without laughing, thus reversing the old proverb. As a portion of the time spent by the Sheriff in England was in a visit to Wrexham, where his father formerly carried on business, we suppose he intends his general remarks also to apply specially to our usually lively little town; and at the present time most of our tradesmen will readily endorse his words, for they report trade "very dull indeed".' ¹⁷

Although the report does not state the purpose of Frederick's visit, it's possible he was investigating what (if anything) remained of his late father's estate in this country. Deeds and other legal papers deposited in Wolverhampton Archives suggest that there was still property here belonging to the family.¹⁸ The outcome of Frederick's visit is not known; but interestingly three years later there was a notice in the London Gazette of an order annulling the bankruptcy of John Wilkinson junior in Lancashire County Court on 28 January 1878.¹⁹

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3. John Wilkinson's will, London Register Office.
4. A.N. Palmer, *John Wilkinson and the Old Bersham Ironworks* (1899), p.54.
5. W.H. Rylands (ed.), *Grantees of Arms named in Docquets and Patents between the years 1687 and 1898*, Harleian Soc. Pubns. (1917), vol.lxviii, p.396.
6. Baines and Parson (1824), vol.ii, p.654.

7. ie. signed his name on becoming a member of the University. This class was the one to which sons of the clergy, the small landowners and the fairly well-to-do attached themselves.
8. Dr John Peile, *Biographical Register of Christ's College, 1505-1905*, vol.ii (1913), p.421.
9. Dr John Peile, *Christ's College* (1900), p.276.
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14. *Illustrated Atlas Map of Menard County* (1874); Rev.R.D. Miller, *Past & Present of Menard County* (1905).
15. *Illustrated Atlas Map of Menard County* (1874).
16. Miller (1905).
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1916: “The Year of Killing”*

By Janet Doody

Major events

At the start of 1916 “militarily the war was not going particularly well for anyone”. However, for Britain two major issues were being addressed: lack of ammunition and men. Under the Minister of Munitions, David Lloyd George, both the quality and supply of ammunition improved and on 2nd March the Military Service Act came into force, bringing an end to British reliance on volunteers to fill the ranks.

On the Western Front, Germany had turned its attention to Verdun, attacking the French on 21st February and demolishing their positions line by line, with losses of around 700,000 from all sides. To counter this, the Allies, now without the French, brought forward their assault at the Somme to the 1st July, beginning with a bombardment of the German trenches. However, unknown to the Allies, these trenches were so deep and formidable that the



British Mark 1 male tank at the Somme, 25th September 1916

majority of the German forces within escaped injury; and as the Allied soldiers, each laden with around 70 pounds of equipment, went 'over the top' into 'No Mans' Land', the Germans surfaced and strafed the area with machine gun fire. That first day on the Somme is still considered to be the worst day in British military history, with Allied losses to German said to be 10 to 1. By the end of the Somme campaign some 650,000 Allied and 500,000 German men were lost, with very little change in the position of the Front Line.

In September, Britain sent the Tank onto the battlefield for the first time and, despite its faults and problems, it introduced sophisticated technology into warfare for the first time - the sign of things to come.

Earlier, on the 31st May, the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet met the German High Seas Fleet in what became known as the Battle of Jutland - "the greatest naval battle in history" - although who won is unclear. The Royal Navy claimed to have "routed the German Fleet"; whilst in Berlin there was talk of "the destruction of British Naval power." Whatever the outcome, the casualty numbers were high: over 6,000 British sailors killed and 2,500 German.

Away from Europe, on 29th April after 143 days of siege, Major Charles Townsend was forced to surrender to the Turkish General Khalil Pasha at Kut-el-Amara in Mesopotamia, and some 13,000 British troops were taken prisoner.

Nearer home, it seemed that finally the Irish Home Rule question had been addressed, though it had been adjourned by Parliament for the duration of the war. Many Irish had volunteered and were serving (and being killed) fighting in the British Forces. As a result of the Irish Republican April/May Easter Rising in Dublin, 794 civilians, and 521 police and troops were killed or wounded. Sir Roger Casement, a former British diplomat who had tried to smuggle a boat load of German arms into Ireland on the eve of the Easter Rising was convicted of High Treason and hanged at Pentonville Prison on 3rd August. Seven rebels were also executed.



Thiepval cemetery and the memorial dedicated to the Missing on the Somme it bears the names of more than 72,000 soldiers. The memorial was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and unveiled on 1st August 1932

Broseley losses

19547 Private Thomas Henry Britton, age 22, and 13303 Pte John Elliot Brazier, age 23, both of the 7th Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry, were killed on the 14th July 1916 and are remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.

2797 Pte Charles Richard Gwilt, 1st Battalion Welsh Guards, died 30th December age 20, and is buried in Bronfay Farm Military Cemetery.

52400 Pte Fred Harris, 10th Battalion Cheshire Regiment, died on 10th October age 19, and is remembered on Thiepval Memorial.

13745 Pte Francis Thomas Jones, MM, 7th Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry age 19, and is remembered on Thiepval Memorial.

53133 Pte John Jones, 19th Battalion King's Royal Liverpool Regiment, died on 12th October and is buried in the Caterpillar Valley Cemetery, Longueval (VII.H.15).

18443 Pte Sidney Walter Knowles, 1st Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry, died on 22nd April age 20, and is remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial.

31758 Corporal Benjamin Morris, 8th Battalion South Lancashire Regiment, was killed on 25th December and is buried in the London Rifle Brigade Cemetery, Belgium

M2/098045 Cpl Harold Garnock Potts, Army Service Corps, died on 6th February and is buried in Broseley Cemetery.

31122 Lance Corporal George Reynolds, 8th Battalion South Lancashire Regiment, died on 21st October age 18, and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.

4517 Pte Jack Tandy, 57th Company Machine Gun Corp (Infantry), died on the 14th March age 35, and is buried in Rue-du-Bacquerot No 1 Military Cemetery.

11599 LCpl Arthur Watson, 5th Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry, died 13th January and is remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial

23850 Pte William Wilde, 5th Battalion Oxford and Bucks Regiment, died 24 August age 30, and is remembered on Thiepval Memorial.

17950 Pte William Ambrose Wright, 5th Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry, died on 23rd August age 38, and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.

The Home Front

On the 5th June, HMS Hampshire, with the Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener on board, hit a mine - there were no survivors. Kitchener was succeeded by the then Minister of Munitions, David Lloyd George, who went on in December to replace Asquith as Prime Minister.

In November, Government figures reported that around 3.2 million women were now employed outside the home. However, they were still not unanimously accepted in a male dominated work place, which often resulted in industrial action. Women dockers at Liverpool were forced to withdraw when men refuse to work with them.

The British and Natural History Museums were closed for the duration of the war, and the International Olympics Committee



David Lloyd George 1863-1945.

Minister of Munitions 1915-16 Secretary of State for War 1916 and Prime Minister from 1916 to 1918

postponed the Games until the end of hostilities. However the Derby horse race was run at Newmarket and won by Fifinella. The hit song of 1916 was "If you were the only girl in the world"; and Coca-Cola introduced contoured bottles to avoid imitation.

In Broseley, the Town Council meetings continued to take place; at one, Mr. W. Instone complained of the "bad condition of the footpath across the "Stocking" due to an overflow of water, and asked the council to "remedy the nuisance". The Petty Sessions heard along with the usual criminal cases a number of school cases regarding absentees, and a number of parents were fined.

On 24th May, Empire Day (now Commonwealth Day on 10th June) was first celebrated as an annual event, "to remind children that they formed part of the British Empire and that they might think of others in lands across the sea". At Broseley, the Union Jack was hoisted in the school yard and was also flown from the church tower.

Entertainments took place throughout the town in the form of teas, fetes, shows and lectures, often to raise funds for the war effort. The lectures though were generally educational, such as the lantern slide show held at the Town Hall, engagingly entitled "Stories from a Southwark Slum".

Oakes Brothers' Letters from the Front

During February, just before conscription, Bert Oakes of Barber Street, Broseley enlisted, was drafted to the Kings Liverpool Regiment and sent for training to Prees Heath. In letters home he relates camp conditions: "*The parade ground is an awful place up*

to your ankles in water & as you march it splashes, wetting putties, overcoat & all, making them in a fearful mess...We get up at 6 o'clock, dress & make beds then drill from 6.45 to 8 followed by breakfast. Then drill till 12, when dinner takes place, of course we do our own cleaning & washing up. Two o'clock sees us at drill again till 4 or so, then tea & when we have put our beds ready we are allowed out till 9.30."

During April, there was an outbreak of measles, which put the whole camp in quarantine and postponed the transfer to France. It also delayed arrangements for his marriage to Gert. But finally, on 16th July, he wrote, "*The portion of France in which we are at present stationed is very beautiful*"; though this later became "*It is heart rendering to pass through what were once busy thriving towns & see the damage & the derelict houses*".



Cis Oakes in later life

Bert soon saw action. On 26th July, he wrote: "*Sunday morning last I was buried by a shell & lost everything. I was sent to hospital & am again at the base feeling better, but still shaky*". At Christmas, he thanked his sister for sending him "*the pork pie, the Orderly Room Sergeant & myself enjoyed (it) for supper with a nice drop of tea & rum. (and when) we were short of bread the batch-cake came in splendid*"

Bert's youngest brother Cis (Cecil) was stationed on the Isle of Wight, complaining "*when you can spare the money (could you*

send me), *a pair or two of thin socks, for the socks we have are too thick, and our boots (being) so heavy it plays up with my feet.*" However, he did write to say he had seen a few local boys: *"I saw Walter Bartlam playing tennis on the Arcade Gardens, he wasn't half surprised to see me, as I was him and there is a fellow up in the hospital here, the name of Edwards from down at Jackfield and also one from Benthall"*.

In July, Cis was moved from the Royal Warwickshire Regiment to the Oxford and Bucks: *"We have been transferred to this lot to make a battalion up for the front, which is leaving in about five weeks"*; and by September he was in France, having *"had a lovely trip across the briney, I didn't feel any effects of it at all"*.

Although he could say little of his location or the conditions he was enduring, sometimes a sentence or two was overlooked: *"Whilst I am writing these few lines there is a big bombardment going on of our guns, but don't worry we are only sending our friends some iron-rations over, just to let them know we are still about"*.

This was followed by *"Send on to me the first chance you have, four tablets of that Erasmic soap, for it's a splendid soap for the skin, and the water we use out here is not over nice so I thought that would be a good disinfection for it"*. Cigarettes and tobacco were always gratefully received, but food stuffs often suffered: *"I got your parcel of plums but it was all smashed up, quite useless and it had spoilt all the other things as well"*.

The letters often illustrate the introduction of new developments. For example, Cis asks: *"I wish you would send an electric torch and a spare battery, for it would be very useful to me out here"*. As winter approached Eddie, his brother, sent him *"a pair of mittens which will be very useful (as it was) bitter cold out here at nights, but we have had some lovely winter clothes issued to us, (including) a fine fur coat, I am going to try to have my photo taken the first chance I get so I will send you one"*.

Bert and Cis were able to keep in touch by postcard and both continued occasionally to see local boys. Cis wrote that he met *"Will Barnett, they used to live up the Bridge bank, by the old works, so if you should happen to see either his mother or Dad, just tell them he (is) going on all right."* And later: *"I saw one of Mr George Aston's sons, the bandmaster, who lives just above us, he(is) in the Royal*

Engineers, he said I was the first he had met that he knew from round our way, he was very pleased to see me".

Sadly, Will Barnett was killed on 5th September 1918 in a flying accident, and one of George Aston's sons, Frank, serving with the Royal Garrison Artillery, was killed on 15th July 1917.

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