

**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 stored at the IGMT Tile Museum at Jackfield.

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](http://www.broseley.org.uk)

### **The Journal**

In this issue we include three articles on aspects of the history of the Broseley area, two relating to John Wilkinson and his times and an item on the early history of the Forester family.

The articles represent ongoing research and reminiscences 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 by 31 August 2011 to the editor, Neil Clarke, Cranleigh, Wellington Road, Little Wenlock, TF6 5BH.

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## AtributetoDrWilliamWithering,1741-99

by George Evans

*This is an edited version of the Annual Wilkinson Lecture given on 7 April 2010*

**W**illiam Witherings was christened at All Saints Church, Wellington, so he was presumably born somewhere in the town, though after much research we don't know where. There has been considerable discussion about his precise birthplace; more important is his character and achievements. His parents were Edmund and Sarah Witherings; Edmund was an apothecary and Sarah the sister of Dr. Brooke Hector, who practised in Lichfield. Later, the family seems to have abandoned the final 's' and been known as Withering.

Wellington claims William Withering as a town hero despite one biography entitled *William Withering of Birmingham*. That's like saying William Shakespeare of London, an idea not likely to be popular in Stratford. Recently, an excellent biography, *The Life and Times of Wiliam Withering, his work, his legacy*, has been published by Dr. Peter Sheldon, M.D., FRCP, a local man who now lives in Leicester and teaches at the university and hospital. Withering may well be described as a strong contender for the title of 'The Greatest Scientist Nobody Has Heard Of'. He was an innovator in medicine, geology, botany and other studies and a great contributor to world science. It is unfortunate that he is relatively unknown outside the medical profession, even in the town of his birth.

William was taught by Rev. Wood of Ercall (presumably High Ercall, where there was a school). Later he was apprenticed to his uncle, Dr Brooke Hector, and after he had 'served his time' he matriculated at Edinburgh University, where he studied 'physic' and later graduated as MD. At the time Edinburgh was a world leader, especially in medicine. He seems to have taken a full part in university life, learning to play several musical instruments, changing his religion from atheist to Church of England, joining the Freemasons and starting a club at which undergraduates spoke only in Latin.

His graduation thesis was in Latin, as was the custom, and titled 'De Angina Gangraenosa'; he dedicated it to his uncle Brooke Hector and thanked his tutor, Rev. Wood. His facility in Latin must have been a great help, as he was able to communicate with leading scientists all

over Europe. After graduating, he set off on a tour, a version of the 'Grand Tour' of richer folks or the back-packing tours now popular; but he only got as far as Paris, when his companion died while William was visiting Paris' largest hospital, the Hotel Dieu.

On returning home he was offered and accepted a practice in Stafford, and also work at Stafford Hospital. This kept him very busy, and he met and married a patient, Helena Cooke, an amateur botanical illustrator. She must have been a great inspiration and help to him as he compiled and published what was to become a standard work on British wild plants, its several volumes being constantly in print for a century.

Now a married man, William decided he should earn more money and, fortunately, Erasmus Darwin (grandfather of Charles) offered him a position at Birmingham hospital. Here, with a large private practice as well as his hospital patients, he was soon earning over £1,000 a year, a huge amount for those days. He kept up the custom of his predecessor, Dr. Small, of treating paupers, who were quite unable to pay for his services, free. He was always a very hard-working man, constantly wondering about the things around him. He invented a pocket microscope for his botanical studies, published the first edition of his *Botany* and at the same time travelled extensively, several hundred miles a year by horse or carriage, to visit patients.

He joined a very influential group of fellow scientists and inventors who called themselves the Lunar Society, because they met on the evening of the Monday next to the full moon for dinner and discussion before returning home in the moonlight around 8pm. Fellow luminaries included Josiah Wedgwood, Matthew Boulton, James Watt, Erasmus Darwin and Joseph Priestley. They frequently invited knowledgeable guests, people who were at the top of their profession, one of whom was John Wilkinson of Broseley. We have no positive information to prove that Wilkinson and Withering ever met but it is most probable that they did. We may wonder about their conversation. As both were polymaths, they must have shared many interests.

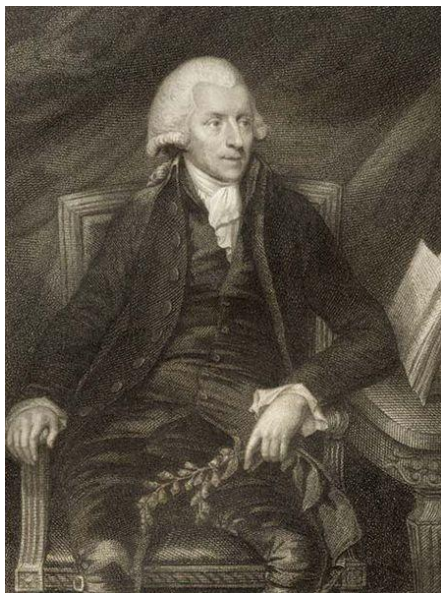
The 'Lunatics', as their detractors called, them were a very high-powered group: Wedgwood virtually invented factory production, Boulton and Watt were brilliant engineers, Darwin was physician, philosopher and poet and Priestley was experimenting with gases and

chemistry. They also backed the anti-slavery movement and sympathised with French revolutionaries (though not their gory methods!). Members helped each other with their various studies and projects, bouncing ideas off one another. These were the typical men of the Enlightenment, many of them world class leaders in their professions.

On one of his long carriage journeys there was a serious accident and Withering was badly hurt, suffering fractures and other damage, though he struggled on. There is also an apocryphal story that on a journey from Birmingham to Stafford the coach paused and Withering was asked his opinion of a woman who was ill with 'dropsy'. He did not have much hope for her. A month later he met her again and found her well. He was told she had taken a 'potion' from an 'old woman of Shropshire'. Impressed, he bought some of the potion and analysed it, finding that the key material was foxgloves. These had been used for alleviating heart problems for centuries, though sometimes with disastrous results. Withering experimented extensively on dropsy sufferers (perhaps free patients), making careful notes of doses and results, until he had established the exact treatment. He then published his most famous and far reaching work, on the medical uses of foxgloves.

Soon his book became standard practise and digitalis, now modified to digoxin, is still in common use in cardiac wards throughout the world, making it second only to aspirin in age and respect. Withering's studies also influenced generations of medical practitioners and other scientists in the value of careful, methodical, meticulous investigation and note keeping.

By now William Withering was highly respected, rich and famous, but he was also a sick man. He diagnosed himself as having consumption or tuberculosis. Meanwhile, he leased Edgbaston Hall and set up a menagerie, breeding dogs and cows and keeping monkeys, one of which caught tuberculosis, possibly from him. He investigated ragstone and discovered barium, (named 'Witherite' after him), studied plants and had the thorn apple named 'Witheringia' and even made a careful investigation of 'fairy rings', discovering them to be caused by toadstools rather than fairies. He wintered in Portugal for his health but could not stop studying, resulting in an examination of some hot springs, for which Portuguese scientists elected him a fellow of their society. Birmingham had outbreaks of scarlet fever which rose to epidemic proportions. Withering again carefully studied the



*William Withering. from a portrait  
by C. F. Von Breda, 1792*

problem and published his researches and findings, leading to much better treatment of the disease.

In 1791 there were pro-monarchy and pro-church riots in Birmingham; the rioters, believing the ‘Lunatics’ favoured French revolutionaries, attacked their houses. Some were damaged but Withering paid some prize fighters who successfully defended Edgbaston Hall, though he was in another house.

He had disputes with others, notably Robert Darwin (Charles’ father) over the treatment of a Mrs. Houlston of Wellington,

and with Jonathan Stokes, a research assistant on his *Botany* books, who wanted more credit for his work. Perhaps Withering was rather tetchy or perhaps he didn’t ‘suffer fools gladly’. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and a Fellow of the Linean Society, which may account for the fact that his only known portrait is in Stockholm, apart from etchings taken from it.

Eventually, overcome by his tuberculosis, he had to retire from his work at Birmingham General Hospital. Despite his indomitable energy, spirit and intelligence, even he was finding it all too much. He bought a house at Sparkbrook and died soon after moving in. He was buried in the old church at Edgbaston, where a substantial poetic monument was erected.

William Withering’s legacy to the medical world is not only his digitalis but more especially the manner in which he came to decide on its application and dosage, that of careful, detailed study, meticulous notes and thought. In his other scientific studies he also applied his thoroughness and deliberation. The plants and minerals he investigated had been known for centuries, but his painstaking,

obsessive analysis following exhaustive examination and study influenced many well outside his circle of acquaintances. He marks the change from older concepts to the new exact sciences that were developing in his century.

His name, with or without the final 's', is a great detraction from his fame. In Wellington we thought it appropriate to honour our hero by naming the new local hospital after him, until we considered the consequences. How would we like to be taken off to the Withering Hospital? However hard we wished, the name was unsuitable. There are, however, two pictures in the Princess Royal Hospital in his honour and two more at the Town Council offices. The local unitary authority is planting foxgloves on the road island outside the hospital. Dr. Mary Heber, the PRH cardiologist, is a strong supporter of Withering and has lectured on his work. She has told me I must always include in any writing or talk about digitalis that if used incorrectly, it's a deadly poison, like almost all the medicines prescribed by modern physicians.

After giving talks on this subject recently, I've been given other insights:

- I am told that Rev. Wood invented a timepiece which was produced by James Watt;
- a friend who deals in antique instruments said he had recently sold several of the plant microscopes designed by Withering;
- Withering's daughter, I'm told, married the industrialist Beriah Botfield of Old Park.
- his son, William, was most helpful in setting up Kew Gardens and continued to publish *The Botany*.

I am well aware of the shortcomings of this brief tribute; it would have been much worse but for the considerable help of my friends Neil Clarke, Geoff Harrison, Allan Frost and Peter Sheldon.

Finally, may I ask anyone reading this article who agrees about the importance of our hero to spread his name abroad and encourage wider interest in 'The Greatest British Scientist Nobody's Ever Heard Of'.

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## Broseley's Windmills

by Tim Booth

I am sure many people living in the town are aware of the truncated windmill tower which still stands close to Mill Lane on Syners (or Siners) Hill. Until recently, my only knowledge of windmills in Broseley was contained in two sentences in *The Victoria County History of Shropshire*, volume X:

*There were two windmills in Broseley in 1776, worked by Leonard Jennings, an original shareholder in the Iron Bridge. In 1801 windmills (perhaps those of 1776) stood at Syners Hill and Ferneybank.*

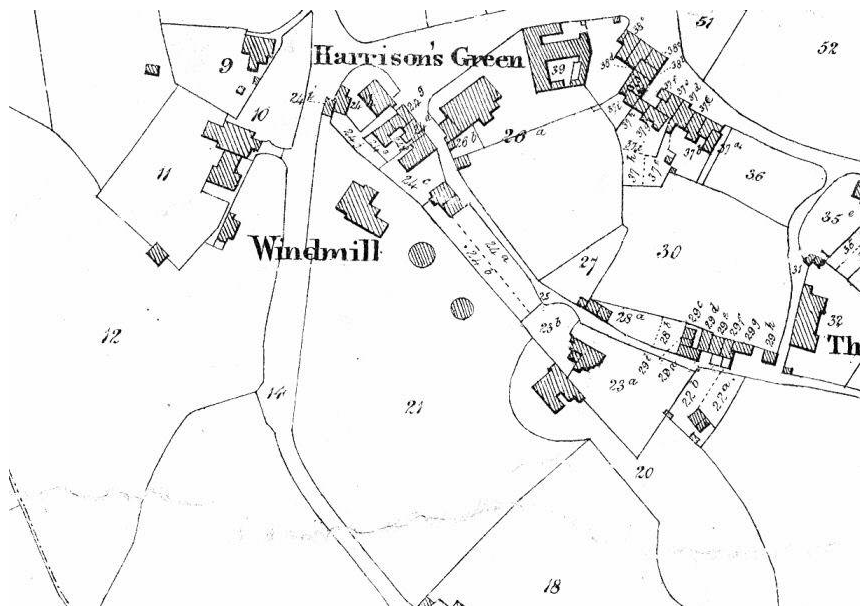
However, the recent discovery of a millwright's notebook, in Hereford Record Office<sup>1</sup>, has provided much new information and stimulated further research. The notebook, found by a fellow mill researcher, Alan Stoyel, was the property of Benjamin Cartwright of Wombourne and covers the years from 1774 to the early 1800s. It is largely a wages book but includes some draft dimensions and estimates of both watermills and windmills, including two at Syners Hill in Broseley.

Some background to the ownership of Syners Hill is provided by an Assignment of Lease, dated 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1821, by Mary Jennings, widow of Leonard Jennings, to Jeremiah Ashwood, miller<sup>2</sup>. The land had been leased by George Forester to Charles Jones for 99 years, at £4 per annum, from 25<sup>th</sup> March 1758. When Charles Jones died in 1764, he left his freehold and leasehold property to Joseph Cartwright, a farmer. On 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1775, Cartwright sold the remainder of the lease to Leonard Jennings for £440. The Assignment of Lease goes on to say that Leonard Jennings built two wind corn mills on the site.

According to his notebook, Benjamin Cartwright spent two days at Broseley for Mr Jennings during the week beginning 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1777. A draft copy of the proposed 'Dimensions of

Mr Jennings Windmill' shows what was deemed appropriate for the site. Interestingly, the name 'Hancocks' has been crossed out and 'Jennings' written above. In the week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1777, Cartwright spent '1 day going to hampton to meet Mr. Hancock at boat is windmill' (for which he paid himself 5 shillings). He then spent '1 day at home drawing the draft and making the bill of timber for Mr. Hancock windmill' (2s 6d). It would appear that Mr Hancock did not agree to the estimate so, rather than waste all that work, the mill was offered to Mr Jennings who accepted. It was to be a brick tower mill, 21 feet diameter inside at the base and 12 feet at the top. The height of the brickwork was to be 27 feet surmounted by a timber cap which could be turned round into the wind with a long tail pole. The four sails would each be 30 feet long. The wooden gearing would drive two pairs of millstones and a dressing machine (to separate flour from bran). A pair of French stones, for flour production, would cost £34 and a pair of Derbyshire stones would cost £20. The total cost of constructing the mill was estimated at £294 15s, so the cost of the millstones represented a significant proportion. Work started in the week beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 1778, and continued until early November of that year.

Unfortunately, a rough measurement of the internal diameter at the base of the surviving mill tower shows it to have been rather smaller than the one above. However, Cartwright's notebook also includes the 'Dimensions of Mr. Jennings lesser windmill'. The inside diameter of the base was 16 feet and 10½ feet at the top. Much less detail of its construction is included than for the one above but, again, the sails were to be 30 feet long so the tower would be about the same height. The only information given for the millstones is that they should be 5 feet diameter. Although details of the gears are given, there appears to be no estimate of the cost of the work. The lack of detail about the brick tower suggests it may have been constructed by local builders, with Cartwright fitting the millwork. Work on construction probably started in the middle of 1782 as Cartwright and his men were regularly at Broseley from early September,



*Broseley Tithe Map 1838. This shows the windmills at Syners Hill. Plot 21 is listed as: Windmill, Malt-house, Millfield (meadow), owned by Lord Forester and occupied by Jeremiah Ashwood*

1782, until March, 1783. An entry for 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1783, reads: 'Mr. Jennings pay me for ye new mill'.

All this would seem to suggest that Leonard Jennings was not working two windmills in 1776 when he bought his shares in the Iron Bridge. However, in January and February, 1783, there are two entries on Mr Jennings's account for repairing 'ye old mill'. This cannot refer to the larger mill because one of the workmen, John Rowley, spent two days at 'ye big mill' which would seem to adequately describe the earlier mill built by Cartwright. Perhaps Leonard Jennings had at least one other mill in the vicinity before taking the lease of Syners Hill. Of course, there is the reference to a windmill at Ferneybank in 1801. The source of this is a 'Valuation of Broseley' by V. Vickers jun. dated 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1802<sup>3</sup>. The entry for Syners Hill shows that the windmills there were now occupied by William Lewis and included storehouses, the miller's house and two crofts of land.

Intriguingly, there is also an entry for 'Ferry Bank' where Thomas Beddow had a house, garden, 'small windmill', bakehouse and shop. A 'small windmill' might be a post mill, driving a single pair of stones. Perhaps this had previously belonged to Leonard Jennings but it certainly means that Broseley had three windmills in 1801.

The 1821 Assignment of Lease helps to explain why William Lewis was at Syners Hill in 1801 as it says that Leonard Jennings died in or around September, 1799 and left his property to his son, also Leonard Jennings. Unfortunately, Leonard junior died before his father's will was proved and the property reverted to his mother, Mary Jennings, who subsequently sold the remainder of the lease to Jeremiah Ashwood for £260. Presumably, Lewis rented the mills from Mary Jennings following the deaths of her husband and son. More research is needed to establish when these mills ceased to work but both the tower mills on Syners Hill are marked on the 1840 Tithe Map<sup>4</sup>, whereas the exact location of the 'small windmill' at Ferneybank remains a mystery.

### **Acknowledgements:**

Shaun Colley and Eric Cox.

### **References:**

1. Hereford Record Office L1/1
  2. Shropshire Archives P44/V/1/1 (formerly 2991/Misc/1)
  3. SA D3651/B/65/19
  4. SA P44/T/1/1
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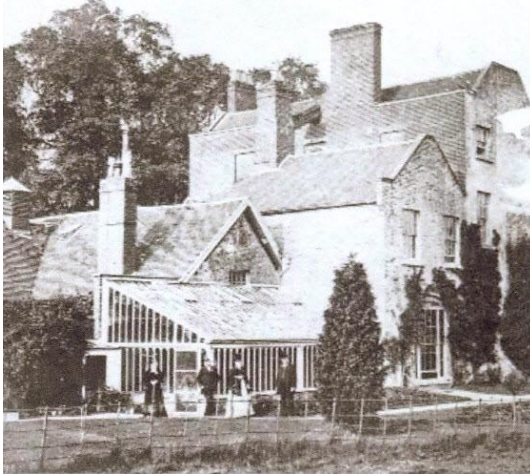
## The Foresters of Wellington

by Neil Clarke

Much of Wellington was once the property of the Forester family, whose association with the area goes back at least to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of being rewarded for services to the Crown, of increasing their wealth and of marriage, the Foresters acquired the manors of Watling Street (the original Wellington Haye), Dothill, Wellington and neighbouring estates such as Little Wenlock. Although the family seat moved out of the area when they acquired the Willey estate near Broseley in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Foresters were still in possession of these holdings until they were sold in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and even today own a small parcel of land in the Ercall area. The town's coat of arms, granted in 1951, includes a horn, which represents the historic link with the Forester family.

Forester is an occupational name, its bearers in this case having been hereditary wardens of the Wellington Haye, part of the Forest of Mount Gilbert which once covered the area around the Wrekin. A haye was originally an enclosure for deer and its name is perpetuated in the local names of Haygate and Haybridge. The forestership of Wellington Haye was a royal appointment and the warden's fee was a grant of a half virgate of land (about 30 acres) in the Haye.

The first recorded member of the Forester family was Hugh, in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. The forestership descended mostly from father to son and by the late 15<sup>th</sup> century was held by Edward Forester. It was this Edward, described as 'of Watling Street', who probably built the first part of the Old Hall, the timber structure of two storeys that runs parallel with Watling Street, in about 1480. The family's wealth and importance was greatly added to by Edward's successors. His grandson, John, a member of Henry VIII's court, was, perhaps owing to poor health, granted the unusual privilege of wearing his hat in the royal presence and, by the time of his death in 1591, had acquired by marriage property at Upton Magna and Arleston. Around 1620, John's grandson, Francis Forester, built a new wing onto the Old Hall – the Jacobean wing with its gabled end toward the roadway; and his son, also named Francis, acquired the manor of Little Wenlock from Sir John Hayward in 1623. Francis's son, also named Francis, was probably the last head of the family to live at the Old Hall, for his



*Dothill House in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century*

son, yet another Francis, moved to Dothill House.

The Foresters acquired Dothill (together with the manor of Wellington) from the Steventon family. The Steventons, originally from Preston upon the Wealdmoors, had come into possession of the

Dothill estate in 1431 when William Steventon married Alice, daughter and heiress of Robert Horton of Dothill. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, a descendant of this marriage, also named William, enlarged the late medieval house at Dothill, creating a five-bayed range together with formal gardens. He was succeeded in 1647 by his grandson, Richard Steventon, whose widowed mother married Francis Forester (III). It was the child of this second marriage, William Forester, who inherited Dothill in 1659, following the death of his unmarried half-brother, Richard Steventon.

William Forester took a keen interest in politics. He was a supporter of the Glorious Revolution, being made a Knight of the Bath by a grateful William III in 1689, and he represented the Borough of Wenlock in Parliament for many years. Sir William's immediate successors increased the family's wealth by marriage: his son, also named William, married Catherine, heiress of William Brooke of Clerkenwell, and his grandson, Brooke Forester, married Elizabeth, heiress of George Weld of Willey, in 1734. Brooke left Dothill to live at Willey Old Hall, but returned to Dothill following the death of his father in 1758. In fact, Brooke was the last head of the Forester family to live at Dothill, and he died there in 1774.

Brooke Forester's son, George, the famous hunting squire, was born at Willey Old Hall in 1738 and lived there all his life. He remained



*The Old Hall Hollyhead Road, Wellington. It is a grade II listed building*

a bachelor and on his death in 1811 Willey and all his other estates, including Watling Street, Dothill, Wellington and Little Wenlock, passed to his cousin, Cecil Forester. It was Cecil who had the grandly Neoclassical new hall built (1813-20) and who was created 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Forester of Willey in 1821.

What became of the two former Forester family residences in the Wellington area? Little is known of the Old Hall on Watling Street in the years following the death of Francis Forester (II) in 1665; but in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century it was leased to Joseph Cranage, who opened a school there in 1845. This continued to be run by his family until 1926, when Ralph Hickman purchased the freehold from Lord Forester. Alterations and additions more than doubled the size of the original house, and a preparatory school continued there until its recent removal to the Wrekin College site.

With his son George established at Willey, Brooke Forester spent his later years at Dothill House with his second wife and their daughter, Harriet. Presumably they continued to live there after his death in 1774, but eventually, as with the Old Hall, Dothill was occupied by tenants. Extensions and alterations to the property, begun by Brooke in the 1760s, continued during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Following the sale of the estate in 1918, most of Dothill was purchased first by Ernest Groom and then by H.F.Hodgson, who sold 197 acres to Wellington Urban District Council in 1956. Dothill House was demolished in about 1960, by then a sad reflection of its former glory.

*(This article originally appeared in 'Wellingtonia no.4, 2009')*

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## James Adam, Trustee and Executor of John Wilkinson by Jennifer Forsyth

The great ironmaster John Wilkinson died in 1808. His lengthy will was dated 1806, but he had a number of codicils appended in the following two years to make his intentions absolutely clear. These were accorded letters and the last, written on January 31, 1808 was given the letter H. In this codicil he desired that his mistress Ann Lewis should take the name of Wilkinson to save their children from 'invidious remarks' and gave his reasons for appointing James Adam an Executor and Trustee. At this time, James Adam was of Runcorn ' *but at present in London*'.

*My view in appointing Mr. James Adam a Trustee and Executor has been and is from my knowledge and conviction of his fitness for such a situation Both in Knowledge and Fortune and time of Life having had experience of his acquaintance with general Business and his cultivated Mind, his Fortune not too great to render him indifferent to the Emoluments of the situation nor too small to make him too dependant thereon And his time of Life and Health such as that may reasonably continue to the end of the Trust.*

Clearly, John Wilkinson placed great faith in Adam as his right-hand man. As a preamble to his will he sets out his reasons for choosing (or not choosing) his trustees and executors, and James Adam was to be appointed to both roles. Wilkinson's nephew, Thomas Jones, lettered D in the codicils to his uncle's will, was plainly under a shadow. *'Mr Thomas Jones having on many occasions shown a disinclination to act with vigour against W. W. (William Wilkinson, John's half brother) agreeable to my expectations And also having accepted of a Trust to his children at his request such conduct has destroyed all confidence I reposed in him....'*

A quest for more information on the favoured James Adam left a paper-chase across England and Wales, each scrap of information raising more questions. It appears that he was travelling all over the country for John Wilkinson, sometimes living with the ironmaster, sometimes alongside but on other occasions in industrial Lancashire on his own business.

The will of James Adam shows how intricately his affairs were tied up with those of his colleague and master.



The first evidence to be had locally of this man was in the deeds of Burplethwaite Hall, Cartmel Fell, then in Lancashire, North of the Sands. He purchased the estate at auction in 1811 for £9,750, with the woodland and timber an extra £1,100. At that time he was of Brymbo Hall in Denbighshire, then owned by the late John Wilkinson's Trustees of which he, James Adam, was one. Wilkinson had purchased Brymbo Hall in 1792, but the Burplethwaite deed states that Adam was 'late of Runcorn' at the time of the sale.

On 11 November 1815, James Adam and his trustee, James Smith of London, let Burplethwaite Hall estate at a peppercorn rent for one year to Thomas Townend of Manchester, William Melville of Nottingham and Saloman Reinhold, merchant, also of Manchester. The following year, James Adam and his trustee released the Burplethwaite property to the same parties (trustees of the late John Close Townsend) on account of a mortgage for £5,000. This mortgage apparently had been transferred to Burplethwaite from land in Nether Meathop (possibly John Wilkinson's property?). This sum of £5,000 was borrowed from Thomas Townend and his trustees in February 1815, and when the security was changed to the Burplethwaite property, it was agreed that Adam could redeem it, on payment of £5,000 with lawful interest.

Presumably, Adam came to the Cartmel peninsula as a result of his close association with the ironmaster, but his role is not clear. He seems to have been a man of affairs, overseeing the details of businesses as diverse as the Order of the Constable's Office for Witherslack in 1813, or advertising a sale at Wilkinson's Bersham iron works, and wherever his name crops up, he seems to be at a different address. When his son James was baptised at Cartmel in 1822, the year before his death, James senior's wife was entered in the register as Mary and their address was then of Wilson House, part of the late ironmaster's estate. The only conclusion one can draw here is that this was a late baptism, as the mother was by then 62.

When John Wilkinson wrote his will in 1806, he assumed that James Adam's fortunes were deemed safe, but matters clearly began to get out of hand some time later. The Burplethwaite deeds disclose that in 1817, commissioners appointed by Acts of 57 George III had lent James Adam £35,000 in Exchequer Bills, for which he gave a bond of £70,000. Despite applying for extra time to repay the debt, when he died in 1823, he still owed £26,216. 11s. 3d., so the Burplethwaite

estate had to be sold, the sale taking place at the King's Arms in Kendal on 20 August, 1827.

From the deeds relating to that sale, it can be seen that Adam had acquired various allotments under the Heversham Enclosure awards, but that he also had acquired vast tracts of land down the Lyth and Winster valleys towards Meathop and Grange, much of it part of the estate when he originally bought it and some of it occupied by John Wilkinson's Trustees. Lot 5 was Flodder Hall with about 65 acres and Nether Meathop Farm was lot 16 with over 276 acres, including woodland of an estimated value of £4,365. Of interest to those seeking Wilkinson's first iron boat, lot 7 was three closes adjoining 'Lyth Pool', as the lagoon in the river Winster was known, where, on old enclosure maps on the east bank of the river is 'Mr. Wilkinson's Road'. Lot 18 was the freehold 'Herbert's Moss', adjoining Wilson House, partly occupied by Wilkinson trustees and partly by Mary Tart, widow of John who had been Wilkinson's steward at Wilson House. Tart is not a local name, but there are many in the Ironbridge area where John Wilkinson had publicly launched his first large iron boat Trial in 1787.

In James Adam's own will there is a clause which indicates complicated arrangements where he held estates for John

Wilkinson's Trust, but he does not want his own estates to be confused with those.

James Adam died in 1823 and his will names five children and his dear wife Mary. The children were: Samuel Smith Adam, Frances Adam,



*Castle Head with later Victorian verandah.  
The house is now a Field Centre*

John James Adam (entered only as James in the Cartmel Bishop's Transcripts,) Adam Fitz Adam (often called only Fitz Adam in contemporary documents) and Mary Adam. He also had two unnamed sisters who depended on him for support. The interest on the capital was to be divided into seven parts, for the use equally of his children and widow, one seventh being for the support of his two sisters. Frances was to be the chief executrix with the help of her brothers. Mary alone was excluded, but the photo copy of the on-line will is very dark where the reason is explained, 'to save her ....' but the word 'trouble' possibly can be made out. One wonders if she was perhaps mentally or physically disabled. A third daughter, Elizabeth, had already died aged 18 in December 1819.

A search through the censuses for each of the children has drawn a blank, except for Frances. She never married and appears to have lived in Shifnal all the rest of her long life. In 1851 she was the postmistress there and the census states that she had been born in Manchester — yet another address for her parents. She died in Shifnal aged 78 in 1867.

The link with Manchester came when James Adam senior's marriage was found. The wedding took place in Manchester cathedral on 6 February, 1785. His bride was Mary Smith, whose surname was added not only to their son Samuel, but in several other Adams nationwide at later dates. Subsequent research revealed that Mary was seven years James's senior, he being only eighteen when he married.

The origins of the family surname are not obvious. Many families of Adam are Scottish but there were a number of Adam families in Wales in the 1740s, according to the I.G.I. One entry was at Wrexham where Adam Adam was baptised in September 1744 in the Presbyterian church. The Bersham iron works of John Wilkinson are only a short distance from Wrexham and this was the chapel which his father Isaac Wilkinson and his family attended, so Adam Adam might possibly have been James's brother or father, hence the repetition of the family name in the next generation.

The Adam children named in James's will have been hard to locate, but there was a marriage for Adam Fitz Adam at Wigan on December 27, 1821, almost certainly the son named as one of the executors. The will of James in 1822 was drawn up by a Warrington

attorney, though he was then of Shifnal and Adam Fitz is therein given the courtesy title of Esquire, whereas his brother Samuel Smith is not.

The various genealogical sites on the internet revealed a parallel family, in the 1851 census. On entering 'James Adam' in the search box, it produced a namesake living at Sutton, Oswestry. He, his mother and his sister had been born in Brymbo, Denbighshire, the site of one of Wilkinson's many ironworks and where Wilkinson had bought the Brymbo Hall estate in 1792.

In 1852, the younger James Adam was 29, unmarried and living with his mother Jane, a widow born in Frodsham on the Cheshire border and a sister Lucy, the latter also having the middle name of Smith. The connection with Frodsham may be a clue. In a directory for the Duke of Bridgewater's canal (1791 - 4), one of the five wharfingers was a James Adam of Preston near Frodsham. The canal was completed by 1776, but a link to the river Mersey was finished in 1791 and this may be the reason for James being referred to as 'Late of Runcorn' in several documents. There is no proof however of the wharfinger being Wilkinson's man, he could have been a cousin or father of the ironmaster's trustee or no relation at all. The age of the other James, born in Brymbo according to the 1851 census is exactly right for the baptism of James Adam at Cartmel in February 1822, but the mothers' names differ, the Welsh one being Jane, the Cartmel one Mary. Frodsham is only about three miles from Runcorn, where James's address was 'late of' when he bought Burplethwaite Hall, but most of his perambulations seem to have been close to the canal systems or waterways of the Cheshire/Welsh borders.

Following the parallel family through the censuses, this younger James's occupation in 1851 was Station Master at Oswestry, but in 1861 he is a chemist's assistant in Kidderminster and ten years later, a chemist and druggist in Halesowen, by this time married with three children. The echoes of family names persist in his family as James and Jane's elder daughter was Frances, then aged seven.

Searches for the origins of the Adam line in Scotland seemed hopeful, but again there was no definite evidence. A trawl through the 1881 census highlighted Larbert, Stirling where Adam S. (Smith?) Adam, born in Falkirk, then aged 53, a widower and a lighterman. His son James was a tinsmith of 19, he and his siblings

Elizabeth, Mary and William all having being born in Larbert. The links with the iron industry nearby and the canal all seem relevant, but red herrings swim in those canals.

James Adam wrote his will when his abode was Shifnal in Shropshire. Remote searches had not been fruitful, so not knowing Adam's religion, moving as he did among Quakers, Presbyterians and Unitarians, (but marrying in Manchester cathedral,) a visit to the Parish Church of Shifnal seemed like a good starting point. The tower was visible from a distance and could have been early twentieth century but this guess was about eight hundred years out. Usually locked, the great doors were just being opened for a memorial service and the verger had a few moments to chat to us. On learning our quest, we were led straight to a marble memorial tablet, now close up against the back of the organ, where, without guidance, it might have remained hidden. There used to be an Adam family vault, we were told, but all the church yard had been levelled for ease of maintenance. The tablet read as follows:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF  
JAMES ADAM  
AND THOSE OF HIS FAMILY WHO ARE INTERRED IN  
A VAULT IN THE CHURCH YARD  
JAMES ADAM BORN 1<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 1767  
DIED IN LONDON 117<sup>TH</sup> JULY 1823  
MARY RELICT OF THE ABOVE BORN 12<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 1760  
DIED 30<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 1836  
ADAM FITZ ADAM BORN 5<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 1797  
DIED 5<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 1837  
ELIZABETH ADAM BORN 21 JUNE 1801  
DIED 12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 1819  
FRANCES ADAM BORN 30<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 1789  
DIED 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 1867.

There is no mention of Samuel Smith Adam here, or of John James who was baptised at Cartmel, so they may have died later or some distance from Shifnal.

The Shropshire Record Office found an entry in *Eddowes Salopian Journal* dated July 23, 1823: Deaths. *On Thursday last in London, after a short but severe illness James Adam Esq. of Shit al in his 57<sup>th</sup> year.*

It would seem that James's son, Samuel Smith was absorbed into the iron network. An advertisement in Gores Liverpool Advertiser dated 26 October 1815 is for the letting of Brymbo ironworks and colliery. The moveable stock was to be taken by appraisal, valuation from Samuel Smith Adam, agent at the works, James Adam at Castlehead (i.e. the late John Wilkinson's mansion near Lindal) or Claughton and Fitchett, Warrington. (John Fitchett of Warrington was the attorney who drew up James Adam's will.)

Inevitably, there has been speculation as to whether the three children of Ann Lewis were actually John Wilkinson's; as there was frequently a ménage à trois, centred on the ironmaster. As can be seen in the above paragraph, James Adam was at Castlehead in 1815 when Ann (Lewis) Wilkinson was residing there with her young children. Only weeks after the ironmaster died, two of her children were christened at Cartmel, their dates of birth given in the Cartmel Bishop's Transcripts. Johnina was born 6 August 1805 and John was



*Brymbo Hall. The building was demolished in 1973 when open cast mining was carried out in the area. (Ron Davies)*

born 8 October 1806, but the Transcripts record Ann Lewis as 'spinster'. It is said that Ann resided at Brymbo Hall during John Wilkinson's lifetime, but the Cartmel baptisms seems to infer that she was already living at Castlehead in 1808.

Ann, by the terms of the ironmaster's will, was to assume the name of Wilkinson instead of her own before he died and so prevent Invidious remarks'. She was a joint Trustee with James Adam and was to live at Castle Head so long as she did not marry. Unfortunately for her, she married Thomas Milson in 1824, but he abandoned her in Boulogne and she had to be rescued by the Wilkinson Trust. Milson's allowance was stopped and his goods sold to recover some costs.

All we know of Ann's origins are from the Annual Register of 1813, where it reported the court case of John Wilkinson's nephew, Thomas Jones, versus Ann's children. It described her as having been a serving maid at Thavies Inn, London, one of the Inns of Court, and it suggested that this was where John Wilkinson met her. However, another possibility is suggested by the Dissenter's burial records of Wrexham. These show a number of Lewis entries, several of Fron Farm, Brymbo. Isaac Wilkinson and his family all were members of the same Presbyterian Chapel in Chester Street, Wrexham, so maybe John Wilkinson met her at the chapel and later procured a job for her at Thavies Inn, where he frequently conducted business. If, however, The Adam family were also members of the congregation, the Lewises, Wilkinsons and Adams could have been friendly since Isaac Wilkinson's arrival in North Wales in 1763.

As James Adam died in London, one might assume he too was there on legal business. He had assiduously fought the case for John Wilkinson's illegitimate children for years, but as a Trustee of the Estate, he had been party to the many sales of the Wilkinson empire before and after the, ironmaster's death. One such successful transaction was in recovering the large French debt incurred just before the Revolution. John Wilkinson and his half brother William supplied the city of Paris with forty miles of iron pipes. These were to convey water from the river Seine to supply the rapidly expanding city, but there were fears that the ensuing troubles would mean that the bill would be forgotten. After the peace in 1815, James Adam went to Paris to negotiate, half-fearing that the debt would be

repudiated, but to his and the shareholder's delight, he received something close to half a million pounds.

When Mary Anne Wilkinson married at Cartmel she was still a ward of Court, so was married by permission of the Lord High Chancellor with James Adam as a witness. Her husband was also illegitimate, William, the second son of Thomas Peter Legh Esq. of Lyme Hall in Cheshire. The couple lived at Brymbo Hall, John Wilkinson's old home, at least until 1834. It was said that William Legh managed Mary Anne's share of the estate (such as was left after litigation,) with 'great care and skill

Johnina Wilkinson married Alexander Murray at Cartmel on April 12. 1826, but died young at Brymbo Hall in June 1835. She too was buried in Wrexham.

The litigation did not end with settlement on John Wilkinson's heirs. After James Adam's death, John Wilkinson junior began the sequence again. He had attended Christ's college, Cambridge for a while, but was arrested in London for bad debts. The executors of his father's estate were constantly baling him out, but in 1828 he decided to file a suit, together with his sister Mary Annel, against James Smith Adam, son of the deceased James. They demanded the list of all the deeds of properties and papers in his hands to settle the debts of the estate. Frances Adam acted as go-between and said her brother refused to hand over the papers, unless paid £10,000. Adam Fitz Adam also refused because James, their father, had made that he had purchased Tenements, Lands, Hereditaments, Real Estate (etc.) in his own name with a view to annexe to the Trust, Property and Estate of the late John Wilkinson, but it seems that as he died suddenly, there was still unfinished business in this regard. Both the Wilkinson and Adam families felt they had claims on the remaining and ever-dwindling resources.

It is believed that John Wilkinson left the equivalent of over £6,000,000, but the litigation concerning his illegitimate children continued until 1813, reducing the estate (it is said) to less than a quarter of the original sum. How much further the capital was depleted by John Wilkinson junior's claims is hard to ascertain.

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## James Clarke (1825-1907) – a Broseley man of many trades

by Peter Taylor

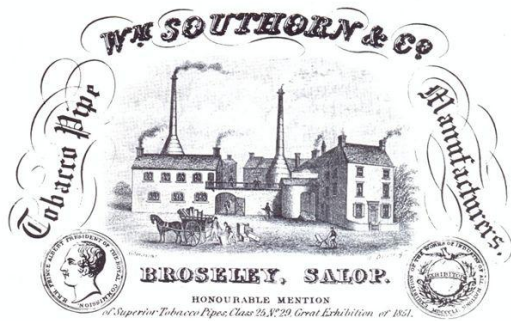
James Clarke was baptised in Broseley on 27 March 1825. Although his father Thomas was born in Mold and worked as a farmer's labourer, his ancestors had originally come from Broseley. James's mother, Martha, came from Acton Scott and the family were living at Harris Green. Receipts sent by Richard Thursfield to the Broseley Board of Health show that in September 1832 he had attended J. and E. Clarke for 8 hours at a cost of 8/- plus 1/- for bleeding Thomas Clarke. The latter was the normal remedy for fever but in November of that year 32 people had died within a fortnight from cholera at Madeley and Lincoln Hill. Owner Jones had his barge sunk below Coalport Bridge as it was believed to be infected and a Cholera Ground was opened at Jackfield for all the bodies. The best treatment was believed to be castor oil, although some accused Mr. Thursfield of spreading the disease. James lived through this and in 1841 was working as a 'moulder', profession not stated, but most likely in the iron industry – although conceivably the pottery, brick, tile and pipemaking industries are all alternatives. James married Eliza Patten, a local girl two years his senior, in 1844; they were both living with James's parents in King Street in 1851, despite having three children and a fourth on the way. James was now working as a carter.

It is not until 1861 that he was certainly employed in the pipemaking trade, by which time he is listed as a 'burner of tobacco pipes', almost certainly at one of the nearby Southorns' works. This was quite a responsible job, since huge numbers of pipes depended on a successful firing of the kiln. By this date he was sharing a house in King Street with his seven children, plus another family of five. The borders were hatters, but his eldest daughter, Sarah Ann now aged 16, was also working as a tobacco pipe maker.

On Thursday 10 March, 1864 a crusade against Church rate defaulters was commenced and on that day the goods of James Clarke were seized. In reference to this case, the Broseley Anti-Church-rate Society issued a placard which called this action a "cruel distraint". The case made the regional papers with the *Birmingham Daily Post* publishing 'a piece of intelligence which ought to make every Englishman whose Christianity is that of the Established Church, blush with shame'...

*The facts of the case are so monstrous that it seems difficult to believe them to have been correctly reported; but, on that head we are afraid there is no room whatever to doubt. It is, we are assured, unquestionably true, that on Thursday, the 10th instant, the Churchwardens of Broseley levied a distraint on the goods of James Clarke, a poor labouring man, for the non-payment of the sum of one shilling and threepence halfpenny, which the said James Clarke was called upon to contribute towards certain expenses which are annually incurred by the congregation that worships in Broseley parish church; that the articles seized in satisfaction of this claim consisted of a clock, an oak-chest, an oak-cupboard, two tables, seven chairs, a tea-tray, a looking-glass, a smoothing-iron, and a straw mattrass ; and that Clarke has a family of seven children, who together with his wife, his bed-ridden mother, aged 83, and his idiotic sister, aged 43, constitute the household which has thus been deprived, at an inclement season of the year, of so many humble, but, to them valuable necessaries, in order that the Church of the State may profit to the munificent amount of fifteenpence halfpenny. Such being the facts, what need be said in the way of comment? Surely nothing more than a simple narrative of the case is necessary, in order to excite from all the community (except perhaps some little clique at Broseley) an indignant cry of SHAME ! Will*

*any Church Defence Association have the face to defend this unexampled instance of ecclesiastical freebooting?'*



James's case became a point of philosophical discussion within church circles. Donations from readers came in, with one kind lady paying James's rates the day before his goods were to be

auctioned. The newspaper pondered who would buy the seized goods and, indeed, when a Mr. Yates's goods went to auction in the Lion Inn a crowd gathered but there were no bids. Eventually, the auctioneer and his clerk bought them all for an amount well in excess of the amount owed. A third case was settled by a well-wisher. However this all appears to have been too much for James's elderly mother who died before the month was out. There were suggestions in the newspaper that James was dissenting as a matter of principle as he earned a "very good wage as a pipemaker" in addition to the 22/- per month received

from the parish. However, a contrary voice said that his poverty was there for all to see, as evidenced by the parish supporting two of his family. This was despite two or three of his children working, his pipemakers wages of 10/- to 12/- per week and a private church charity giving him 10/- per month. The seized goods were valued by the newspaper at between £2 and £3 and it was reckoned it would take James 12 months to save that amount to replace them. Eldest daughter Sarah Ann was still working as a pipemaker and two of the older sons, Ellis and John, both worked as coal miners by the age of 12.

In 1867 James was listed as a collector for 'The People's Universal Life Assurance and Sick Fund Friendly Society' while still continuing his employment as a pipemaker, and is recorded as earning £5 13/- in that year, the commission from 84 "life" and 24 "sick" members. By the time of the 1871 census he had changed trades yet again, this time to a furniture dealer, although his 26 year old daughter Sarah was still 'employed in tobacco pipe works'. She died aged 32.

In 1878 Eliza, James's wife, died and within nine months he had remarried. His second wife was Susannah Barker (nee Brown) with whom he started a new family. Once again James was looking after an extended family, this time including the youngest child from Susannah's first marriage. He was again listed as a furniture dealer in 1881, with premises on the corner of Queen Street and Cape Street, although in 1882 he is described as a cabinet maker when there was to be a 'liquidation by assessment' at the Lion Hotel. He appears to have continued in this line of work up to at least 1897, although in 1901 he was recorded as a general labourer, aged 76.

During his lifetime, James was variously recorded as a moulder, carter, tobacco pipe burner, furniture dealer, cabinet maker and labourer. He held a position of some responsibility at a pipe works during the 1860s, the period when he was also working as a collector. He had at least eleven children, one of whom also worked as a pipe maker from at least 1861 to 1871. Despite the family links with the pipe works, his other children were variously employed in other local trades, such as mining or the encaustic tile works. Although living and working conditions were undoubtedly tough, this family clearly shows that employment was available in a number of local industries and that it was possible to move from one occupation to another. Despite being the son of a farmer's labourer, James was able to move up to take a position of some responsibility at a pipe works before setting up a furniture business that lasted at least 30 years. He died aged 82 in 1907.

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## Memories of Jackfield

by Amy Charlesworth

**M**y mother, Laura Linley nee Williams, was born at Lloyds Head, Jackfield, in 1893. As a child, I was frequently taken by bus and train from Cannock to visit my grandmother, Sarah Ann Williams, who lived at the cottage at the bottom of the wharf at the Calcutts. The cottage stood by the side of the river and we used to get there down a very rough track.

In front of the cottage stood a wall, which grew over the years. Whenever a brick or tile was acquired, it was placed on top of the wall. At the cottage I remember grandma feeding a cockerel. In the yard was a large block of wood used for chopping up firewood. The cockerel used this block as his vantage point when he was ready to crow. However, one morning he must have



*This family group photograph was taken outside the cottage at the Calcutts about 1932. The writer's grandmother is sitting centre front, with her mother, aunt and herself (with hat!) standing behind. Note the cottage wall and also the large old pipe (to the left of the group), a relic of the foundry that once stood here.*

exerted himself too much, for he fell off his perch mid-crow and died.

The cottage kitchen was very basic, having a shallow trough sink, a cooker and a table. I remember sitting on the table with my cousin, and while sitting there grandma would sing to us. A step up from the kitchen took you into the front room. Just inside the room, in the front corner, was a huge fireplace which seemed to take up most of the wall.

The cottage was too small for many visitors and so when my



*Ted Green (the former Jackfield ferryman) in his coracle, together with a companion (c.1935?). Note the building on the far bank of the river at the Lloyds.*

cousins arrived from Birmingham they brought their tent with them and camped out on the wharf. Those of us who slept in the cottage usually slept on the floor. With so many of us to feed, we often had a picnic outside on the river bank, but it was done properly with teapot, table cloth and best glass dishes from the cottage.

After a while Aunt Alice, mum's sister, took over the cottage with Uncle Ted (Green). He had a coracle. I went in it once...but once was enough. My cousin

Amy was older and braver than me and appeared to enjoy her sail with Uncle Ted. He would smoke his pipe as he paddled along.

I never remember the cottage flooding, but I do remember Uncle Ted planting sticks outside the wall to keep track of where the river had got to when it started to rise. He had rights to this stretch of the river and I remember fishermen coming along to get permission to fish down below the cottage. I also remember Uncle Ted catching eels, not that I would eat any of them. However, Aunt Alice was a good cake cook and I never refused any of her offerings. She didn't use scales, everything was measured out by hand and there was always a successful cake at the end of it.

As we got older, I remember going to weddings at the church and parties at the village hall. Aunt Alice's son, Tom, became the gatekeeper for the railway at Jackfield sidings. He lived in the cottage by the crossing gates. My husband used to love to go and spend time with him, waiting for the bells to ring to tell them that the gates needed to be opened as a train was approaching. I believe the gates were the largest in the country. The crossing keeper's cottage was often flooded when water ran down the hill, and over the years the damage caused meant it had to be pulled down.

I understand that the cottage I used to visit at the Calcutts is still standing but has been altered, making it now a larger property, and also that the old wall at the front has been rebuilt.

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