

**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 present two Wilkinson-related articles – the first on his fellow promoter of the Iron Bridge, Thomas Farnolls Pritchard, and the second on his medicinal use of ether; and also three related to Broseley - an account of the residence in the town of the Victorian writer, Favell Lee Mortimer, a selection of extracts from local newspapers relating to the area and a further episode of Dennis Mason’s memoirs. The articles represent ongoing research and reminiscences of Society members and others, and we are grateful to the 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 2008 to the Editor, Neil Clarke, Cranleigh, Wellington Road, Little Wenlock, TF6 5BH.

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## Thomas Farnolls Pritchard of Shrewsbury, Architect and 'Inventor of Cast Iron Bridges'

by Julia Ionides, M.A.

*This is an edited version of the Annual Wilkinson Lecture delivered on 4 April 2007*

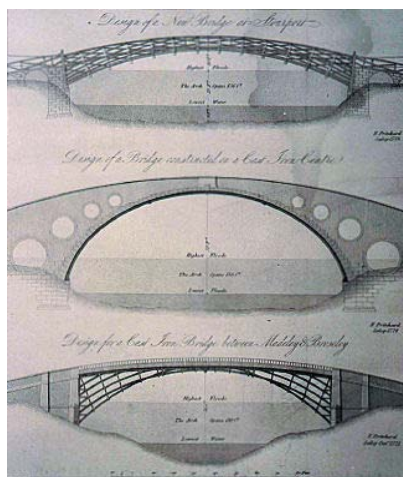
Interest in the work of Thomas Farnolls Pritchard has risen since the identification of his drawing book in the 1960s. The book, which contains about 100 drawings, mainly of chimney pieces, covers the years 1764-69 and is mostly for clients in the Border Marches.



Pritchard's father was a mason/joiner and young Thomas followed in his footsteps. All his life Pritchard is described in the parish records as 'joyner', although some of the monuments he designed have the inscription 'architect'.

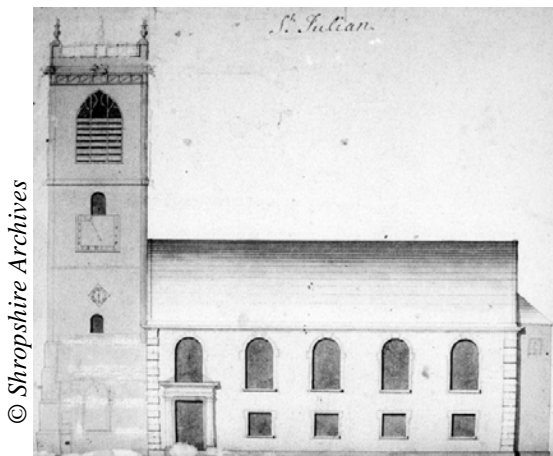
*Portrait of Thomas Farnolls Pritchard.  
Courtesy of IGMT*

Pritchard was a Shrewsbury man. He was born in 1723 and he did not live anywhere else until the last ten years of his life when he moved to Eyton on Severn where he died in 1777. By that time his best-known achievement, the Iron Bridge, was on its way to being built and it is sad that he did not live to see it completed. It is accepted today that he was one of the main instigators of the idea of an iron bridge.



The use of cast iron had interested him for some years and he had used it for centring on the bridge at Stourport; at least he proposed using it and probably did, but the bridge was washed away in floods some years later and we have only his grandson's word for this revolutionary use of the new material.

The first major job of Pritchard's that is well documented is St. Julian's



church in Shrewsbury - his own church; his design is seen below. St. Julian's and work on the Salop Infirmary could be said to have set Pritchard in the right direction for his future as on both these jobs he met important patrons who were relations or friends of others in similar situations and his

name was passed on to them. Conversions and extensions were the kind of work which Pritchard specialised in. Pritchard carried out a fine example of updating in Ludlow when he remodelled the medieval Guildhall.

The Guildhall, in Mill Street, had belonged to the Palmers Guild, a rich organisation formed to say masses for the souls of the dead. After the Reformation the hall had come into the possession of Ludlow Corporation for meetings, courts and banquets. In 1774 Pritchard was given the job of renovating and updating it and full accounts exist for this work which provide interesting information. The building makes a handsome addition to Mill Street in Ludlow with its Batty Langley doorway and Gothick windows.

In 1771 Pritchard made a survey of Ludlow Castle, and in 1868 Thomas Wright, whose father had lived in Ludlow in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, wrote about this survey in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*. He said that the government had contemplated demolishing the whole building and selling the materials and called in Pritchard to value it. He

continued: 'It is evident that Mr Pritchard sought to save the building by wonderfully undervaluing the materials so as to shew that they would not pay for the work of destruction and we have to thank him partly, for the prevention of so extraordinary an act of vandalism.'

Pritchard showed his interest in old buildings when he wrote in a survey of Powis Castle in 1772: "The dining and anti room ceilings are ornamented with historical paintings and the drawing room ceiling enriched with very old stucco'd ornamental figures ... the whole of this apartment makes a noble appearance and ought to be preserved nearly in the present state."

Another building where the older house was retained was Swan Hill Court House in Shrewsbury, pictured right. This is a country house in a town. It is close to the fashionable area of St. John's Hill, Belmont and the old town walls and the river Severn, and when the house was built in 1761 it engulfed the old timber framed building on the site; another house, described as 'being very ruinous and not habitable' was removed completely and 'made use of for a fence'. Some of the remaining timbers and frame that formed part of the cottage are now in the kitchen of the Georgian house and cut across the kitchen windows.



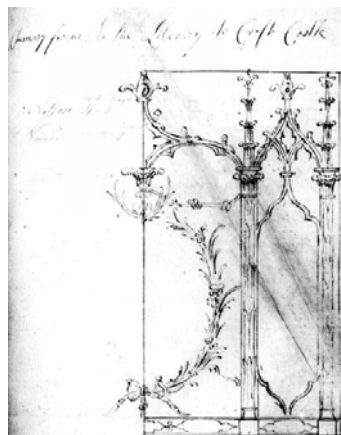
A completely different building is Croft Castle in Herefordshire. Here Pritchard worked for Thomas Johnes. Croft still has the form of a



Norman Castle and had been the home of the Crofts for centuries, but they had mortgaged it and it came into the hands of Richard Knight, a wealthy ironmaster of Downton. Pritchard updated the castle, but only the east front was Gothicised to any extent and an ogee

arch put over the door. This is now inside the porch as alterations were carried out in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by the-then tenants, the Kevill Davies, seen above during a presentation by the citizens of Leominster.

At Croft Pritchard left most of the exterior rather severe; to emphasise its Norman military origins, the crenallations were added or restored all round, but he also created the prettiest of interiors. Inside the castle is some of Pritchard's best work; some, like the overmantel, on the right, for the library and door-cases and swags of flowers are included in the his drawing book, and there are also designs for mirrors no longer there.



Pritchard is connected with the work at the Broad Gate in Ludlow. The monument of the owner, Samuel Sprott, in Ludford Church is signed by Pritchard and is adjacent to Ludford House where Pritchard also worked. Pritchard is known to have worked in Ludlow at that period and since the Broad Gate House shows Pritchardian symptoms there is a good case for including it in the list of work. The Sprott family came from the Marsh near Much Wenlock; Henry Sprott was buried in Barrow church and has a monument very similar to his brother's at Ludford, probably also by Pritchard.

Back to cast iron. The use of cast iron for domestic purposes at an early date arises again at Gaines in Worcestershire. The phases of building



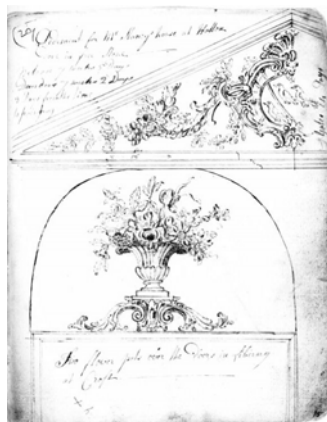
are hard to work out with confusing levels, as the late 17<sup>th</sup> century house was added to in the early 1700s and again in 1764. The extension on one end is curved and the one at the other end has an additional room above and columns have been provided for support. These are made of cast iron and the designs for

the wooden formers for making the cast iron appear in Pritchard's drawing book.

However, the cast iron does not go up to the ceiling; the columns can be seen in the picture above. The spandrels at the top are wood and present us with a problem. If these columns had no structural function why were they made of cast iron? Were they put in afterwards to the same design and Pritchard's original columns were made of wood? Did Pritchard use cast iron as a test and for strength in a position when wooden columns might have been knocked by furniture? Do the columns contain slim wrought iron cores that cannot be detected easily? As yet we have no answer.

The work at Gaines, together with the designs for the Iron Bridge, does put Pritchard among the pioneers of the new material and he could almost be considered as one of the engineer-architects that became a distinct profession in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Certainly Telford, Shropshire's own surveyor for many years, acknowledged the work done by Pritchard, according to his biographer John Rickman. When he was shown the original drawing of the Iron Bridge by John White, Pritchard's son-in-law, he thought it formed an era in bridge building and went on to say 'I consider it only justice to the ingenious artist to record his merit on this occasion'.

Unlike Gaines, which has changed hands many times, Hatton Grange has remained with the Slaney family since it was built by Pritchard in the 1760s. Hatton Grange is probably the most important house that is connected with Pritchard and one that we know he built almost from scratch. Hatton Grange annoyingly possesses all the accounts drawn up by Pritchard but no specification or plans that I have seen. Eight chimney pieces were designed for the house, made in Shrewsbury at Pritchard's workshop, thought to be in Pride Hill, and transported to Hatton 15 miles away; the cost of the packing cases ranged from 12s. 7d to £2 3s. 2d. A contract was drawn up in 1763 and work started a year later, with completion date Michaelmas 1768. Unfortunately, the contract has had pieces cut out of it, so





the total amount for the job is hard to work out. Originally, it was thought to be the unlikely sum of £1,518 from the amounts paid by Plowden Slaney to Pritchard, but a note written in about 1808 by Plowden's son, Robert, stated that the total, including landscaping and stables, came to a more realistic £6,630.

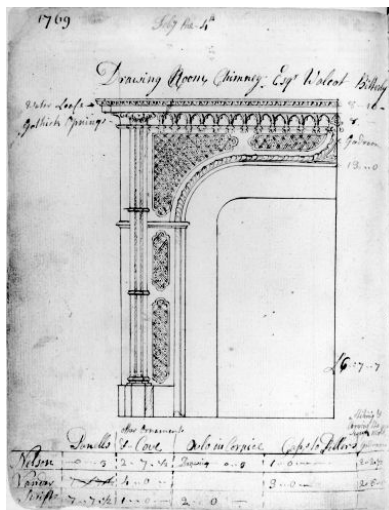
Hatton is built of red brick, most of which were made there at a cost of 7 shillings per 1000, but those on the front came from Albrighton; they are of a better quality and were evenly fired, which produced a consistent light red colour. Also among the designs are a stair case bracket and a pediment, shown above, which tells us that Pritchard was working on two major commissions at the same period – Hatton and Croft. The cream-coloured stone came from Cosford in Shropshire and was used for the small stone parapet and the stone pediment. The slate for the roof came from Westmoreland. It came by boat to Bristol and then up the Severn by trow. We know that Pritchard went to Westmoreland in 1760 to inspect the slates for the Foundling Hospital in Shrewsbury, and so presumably by the time he worked on Hatton he had found a reliable source.

The reason for the update of Bitterley Court was change of ownership; the house was sold in 1766 and the new owner, a cousin of the previous one, called in Pritchard to carry out the work in 1769. Luckily the sale details have survived and so we know what the house was like before the work was carried out. Originally it was an H-shaped 17<sup>th</sup> century house with a central hall.

Bitterley, seen right with the 'new' Pritchard elevation, was updated towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century when a new roof was put on and a garret created under the roof. This accounts for the base of



one of the star shaped chimney flues now being inside; it has been plastered over in one of the garret bedrooms and adds an unintended decorative feature. Pritchard turned the entrance to the house around 90 degrees and created a new fashionable facade on the south side. He cleverly made this elevation seem symmetrical until on closer inspection it is seen that some of the



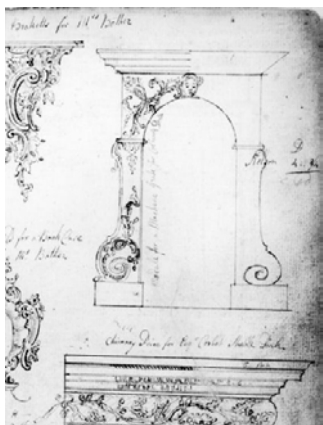
windows are false ones and the form was dictated to some extent by what lay behind. A new hall was made out of the staircase, and a parlour and study. New chimney pieces, such as the one on the left. We know from the sale details of 1766 that most of the downstairs rooms were wainscoted and this has been left in place except for some details which seem to be deliberately created historicism, either by Pritchard or carried out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The wooden panelling beneath the dado rail is in the form of bonded rustication, a very unusual feature. A new stair

was made further back and this was elegantly fitted into a small space.

The simplicity of the staircase at Bitterley contrasts with the elaborate detail on the staircase at Shipton Hall, pictured right. Here again the old Elizabethan house needed updating and the client was Mr Mytton, a member of the north Shropshire family noted for its eccentricities. At Shipton Pritchard seems to have compressed all the detail from Croft Castle's staircase into the small space of the stairwell to almost overwhelming effect. He also extended the back of the house to form a library and enlarge the drawing room; Gothick windows have been inserted on the stairwells and the older windows on the right have been Gothicised to match. The new extension proclaims itself proudly against the older fabric of the Hall, but is not intrusive.



A most interesting feature at Shipton is the cast-iron 'machine grate'; below are the design and the stove itself today. We are not quite sure how it worked and if it has all survived.



A last example, one of the most important of Pritchard's early jobs but no longer really in existence, is Tern Hall which was replaced by Attingham Park.

We are not really quite sure of Pritchard's role here as the documentary evidence is erratic; he is referred to more as a contractor and clerk of works. It all raises the often-quoted piece about the 'blunder of an



*Tern Hall on the Green Frog Service made by Wedgwood for Catherine the Great.*

architect who built the windows so high from the ground that no one sitting could look out of them'. Work had started at Tern Hall in 1758-9, replacing the old timber framed house on the change of ownership of the estate, and this criticism was written by Noel Hill, first Lord Berwick in 1771, so a lot of water had flowed along the Tern during that time. The

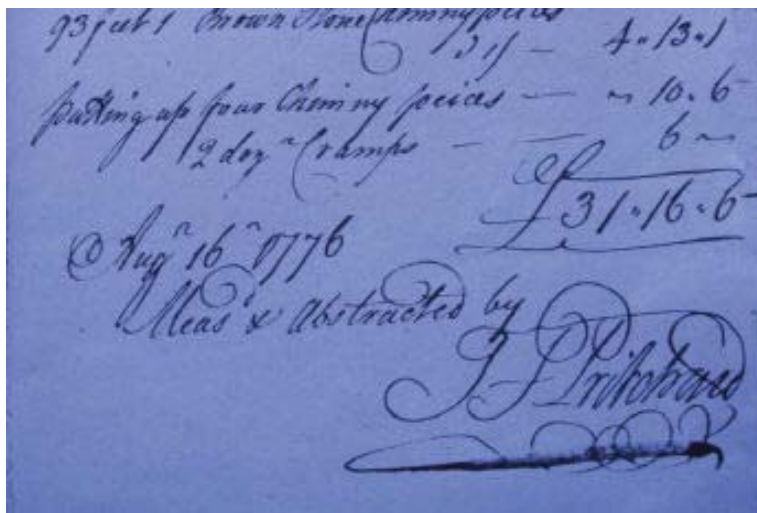
picturesque movement was starting to come to life and the marriage of garden and house becoming fashionable. Noel Hill, now in charge of the estate was showing his power and wanting the latest fashion. In fact Pritchard was well aware of this trend as this is indicated by his suggestions for Powis Castle when he wrote in 1772 'the windows which command a delightful prospect should be kept low ... The east

window in the drawing room is introduced on account of the beautiful prospect there is from it'. Maybe he was simply not going to get caught out again by a changing whim.

There is no definite indication that Pritchard is the architect referred to at Tern Hall, although he was certainly the man on the spot in all senses of the word. Robert Mylne was called in to sort out the so-called muddle. In any case, as soon as Noel Hill came into his money he enveloped Tern Hall with Attingham Park and the old house is within like a ghost.

The Attingham papers contain a great deal of information about building materials, the workmen and domestic details of the family which make fascinating and side-tracking reading. A little note tucked in among them indicates that perhaps Noel Hill did not consider Pritchard responsible for the window blunder - it reveals that Hill was paying interest to Pritchard for a loan of £1000, a considerable sum then.

This is a brief summary of some of the work by Thomas Farnolls Pritchard. He carried out much more work but there is not enough space here to discuss more than a sample and I hope that it might inspire people to discover more about Shropshire's leading 18<sup>th</sup> century architect.



*Pritchard's distinctive signature on a valuation document*

## John Wilkinson and the medicinal use of Ether

by Paul Luter

During 1796 John Wilkinson was subject to great pain from a physical complaint. The exact nature and duration of this complaint is currently unknown. However, Thomas Turner of Caughley would have been aware of it as he travelled to London with Wilkinson. We know that Thomas Turner visited London with John Wilkinson and others many times. It is thought that it was probably during these visits Turner met his second wife, Mary Alsop, a parishioner of Christchurch, Doctors Common, London, whom he later married at Barrow Church in September 1796. What is certain is that during early April 1796 John Wilkinson was very pre-occupied with the development of a new shingling hammer, and also a new method of rolling, which Richard Crawshay and Watkin George were to view in mid-April. At the same time, Crawshay wished to demonstrate the effectiveness of two new furnaces he had built at Cyfarthfa, which produced 45-50 tons of iron per week; and he also communicated his concerns about the new tax on salt.

By November 1797, Wilkinson's deteriorating condition was so bad that Richard Crawshay advised Wilkinson to go with him to Bath for recuperation and cure. Wilkinson wanted to go to Buxton in Derbyshire but Crawshay told him that the journey would be too much for him and that he would be 'chilled to death'. Crawshay recommended that Wilkinson read a book published in 1788, entitled *A dissertation on the influence of the passions upon disorders of the body*, by Doctor William Falconer (1744-1824). Falconer lived in Bath and was to be one of Crawshay's and Wilkinson's companions on their visit. In confirmation of the increasing difficulties Wilkinson was experiencing with his health at this time, Richard Crawshay in the letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> November 1797 expressed his concern over the amounts of ether being taken by Wilkinson and advised him to mix the ether with laudanum and sterilized water. By 26<sup>th</sup> December Wilkinson was gravely ill and near the point of death, and, according to Richard Crawshay, only a cure procured by a woman named Mrs Price of Wenvoe had brought him relief.

It seems that Wilkinson's health problem was short-lived, as in a later letter Crawshay reports an improvement in his health. (At the same time Crawshay himself was so ill he thought he would die.) As we are focusing on a very short period in Wilkinson's life, we still have to ask

certain pertinent questions. For example, how prevalent was the practice of taking ether in the 1790s? Where did Wilkinson get the idea of using ether? How was the ether administered? What are the effects of large amounts of ether? How could this have affected Wilkinson's working relationships at the time?

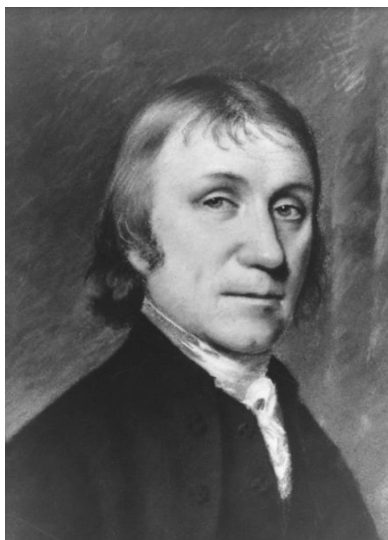
Taking ether seems to have been common at this time. Crawshay himself wrote to Wilkinson on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1797 with the opening remarks, 'Ether is a capital thing for us chronic folks – so keep off east winds and we may hope to weather this winter'. A bottle of ether was found in Lord Horatio Nelson's medical chest (from the 1790-1805 period), examined in Burnham Thorpe church, Norfolk. Ether itself is a colourless, odourless liquid with the chemical formula  $(C_2H_5)_2O$ , produced by the distillation of alcohol with concentrated sulphuric acid. It is almost immiscible with water and evaporates rapidly in the air, producing extreme cold. The history of the use of ether before anaesthesia is one which has been examined only in recent years.

In 1730, about the time of Wilkinson's birth, the German scientist Frobenius called it *Oil of Ether*, describing how it was applied for toothache, earache, neck pain and headache; and this practice continued throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The recreational use of ether was initiated by physicians and university students in the later part of the century, when it was regarded as an effective substitute for alcohol. Small doses depress the central nervous system, quickly and inexpensively producing 'a safe state of euphoric intoxication', without causing a hangover. In 1818 Michael Faraday and Humphrey Davy, when experimenting with nitrous oxide, noted that ether had similar properties to gas; it caused drowsiness and relieved pain. Faraday also suggested its use in asthma. Indeed in the 1790s it seems ether was a recommended treatment for asthma and also dealt with localised pain by being applied to the skin. Interestingly, then, here are two possibilities for Wilkinson's excessive use of ether in 1796. Perhaps he suffered with asthma or a bronchial condition contracted during his many years in damp and dusty works, or used it on a localised pain spot and the evaporative cooling properties eased the pain of a limb or some tenderness and swelling.

A letter of Gilbert Gilpin, a former clerk at Bersham ironworks (preserved in the Shackerley Collection) may give some insight into Wilkinson's condition. Gilpin refers to 'Old Dupee' whose 'severe illness in the spring has reduced him much, and now the winter was coming on he confined himself indoors. He could eat an hearty dinner and drink his usual grog, but the winter is most likely to be one too

many for him'. If Gilpin is here referring to Wilkinson, then the latter appears to be suffering from similar symptoms to those that Crawshaw alluded to in his letter of January 1797. Wilkinson may have been suffering greatly and become inactive during the winter months. It is possible that riding horses for long distances along uneven and difficult highways over many years may have created a spinal injury of some sort, and that ether applied to the skin would have eased such pain. Was their any other reason Wilkinson took large doses of ether?

Examining the research into the application of ether by other scientists and physicians in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries may throw some light on this. Eli Ives of Yale University used its cooling action on the scrotum to reduce strangulated hernias. Taken internally it was used for whooping cough, hysteria, syncope, lethargy and epilepsy, and especially as a palliative and expectorant for chest complaints. Ether



*Joseph Priestley. (1733-1804) by Ellen Sharples*

From Wikipedia

drops were usually given on a lump of sugar or in wine. The research of Antoine de Lavoisier and Joseph Priestley into respiration laid the foundations of inhalation anaesthesia. In the last ten years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century physicians such as Priestley began to treat certain conditions by asking their patients to inhale quantities of newly identified gases. This method of therapeutics became known as 'pneumatic medicine'. Among its early exponents were Dr Thomas Beddoes of Shifnal and Dr Richard Pearson of Birmingham, who was the first to advocate ether vapour inhalation and reported its beneficial effects in the *Annals of Medicine*.

An interesting article published in the *Wolverhampton Chronicle* of 19<sup>th</sup> May 1847 discusses the uses and effects of ether during the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and offers an interesting insight into the methods Wilkinson probably used to administer the drug to himself. The article quotes the research of Dr Pearson and Dr Beddoes, published during 1794, which describes the method of ether inhalation thus: 'The manner



Thomas Beddoes 1760-1808

is very simple. Two teaspoonfuls of ether are put into a tea pot which is then held near a candle whilst the thumb is placed over the spout. When the vapour pressure in the tea pot is forced against the thumb, the spout is put directly into the mouth of the patient and air drawn into the lungs'. Certainly Wilkinson knew of Beddoes through the mutual friendship with William Reynolds of Ketley, and it is not beyond the realms of possibility that, as Beddoes was using ether to replace the use of hydrogen gas from 1794,

Wilkinson had initiated the use of ether through this source

In 1795 a novel inhaler was devised by R.J. Thornton, who also recommended the tea pot method. This teapot method was published by Beddoes's associate Pearson in *Medical Facts and Observations, Volume Seven* (1797); the paper was entitled 'Some account of the effects of the vapour of vitriolic ether in cases of Phthisis pulmonalia communicated in a letter to Dr Simmons, F.R.S. by Richard Pearson M.D., Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, London'. Later, in 1803, Pearson moved from Birmingham to London where he published a further pamphlet on influenza, which circulated extensively that year. Pearson claimed the only side-effects of ether were 'a slight degree of sickness and giddiness, which would soon pass'.

So, in conclusion, clearly John Wilkinson like many of his contemporaries used ether; but it is not possible to identify precisely what his medical condition was during 1796-97 which induced him to administer such large quantities of it. At the very least, it may have eased a persistent cough that he had developed over the years.



## Writer, Teacher and Spiritual Mentor

by Neil Clarke

**I**t is not widely known that a prolific writer of religious books for children in the 19<sup>th</sup> century lived for a while in Broseley.

Favell Lee Mortimer, second daughter of wealthy Quaker banker David Bevan, was born in London in July 1802. Educated at home, she followed a busy social life before undergoing a religious conversion in 1827; she then began visiting and teaching the poor on her father's estates at Belmont, near Barnet, and Fosbury House in Wiltshire. She heard the leading evangelical preachers of the day and became acquainted with the young Henry Edward Manning. Manning was a member of the Oxford Movement, which tried to revive High Church ideas and practices in the Church of England; he was later to convert to Roman Catholicism and eventually became Archbishop of Westminster and Cardinal.

In 1836 Favell published her first book, *The Peep of Day, or A series of the earliest religious instruction the infant mind is capable of receiving*, a reading book which grew from her own teaching efforts.



*Favell Lee Mortimer*

None of the similar manuals which followed achieved the popularity of *The Peep of Day*, which passed through numerous English editions and was published by the Religious Tract Society in thirty-seven different languages and dialects. Her manuals of elementary secular instruction included geography books such as *Near Home, or The Countries of Europe Described* (1849), and reading books such as *Reading without Tears* (1857), which showed energetic interest in devising original ways to teach reading

to young children (for example, using large cards rather than hornbook alphabets).<sup>1</sup>

In April 1841 Favell Bevan married the Rev. Thomas Mortimer, minister of Gray's Inn Episcopal Chapel in London. A widower with two daughters, he had previously served as a relief preacher at the Bevans's newly built church at Belmont. The couple lived first at Finchley and later in Camden Town, before moving in 1847 to Mornington Road.

The circumstances of their next move are not known: a bequest of £20,000 in her father's will and her husband's failing health may have been contributory factors. However, it is recorded that Thomas Mortimer died at Broseley in November 1850 and that Favell rented Broseley Hall. She was certainly there at the time of the census in March 1851: she is listed as 'Fund holder and author of children's books'; living with her was her 'adopted son', Lethbridge Charles Moore, aged 27, who was described as 'Student for the ministry of the Established Church'; his mother Frances and young sister Mary were recorded as visitors to the house; and five servants were listed, seemingly having accompanied the Mortimers from London.<sup>2</sup>



Broseley Hall in the late 1840s

It would appear that while in Broseley Favell Mortimer wrote two of her many books, *Far Off, or Asia and Australia Described* (1852-54) and an updated edition of *The Night of Toil* (1853). She lived at Broseley Hall for four years after her husband's death before moving to Hendon. Then in 1862 she accompanied her adopted son and his family to Norfolk when he became vicar of Sheringham. Continuing

to write and looking after six orphans in the house she purchased at Runton, she died there in August 1878 and was buried in the churchyard at Sheringham.<sup>3</sup>

A useful source for Favell Lee Mortimer's residence in Broseley, and other aspects of her life, is a letter written by Lord Forester to *The Times* in January 1892 on the occasion of the death of Cardinal Manning.<sup>4</sup> Canon Orlando Watkin Weld Forester, 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Forester, succeeded his uncle, Dr Townshend Forester as Rector of Broseley in 1842. He himself was the author of sermons and tracts and oversaw the building of the new church in 1843-45. All Saints appears to have flourished during his incumbency: on Census Sunday 1851 there was a morning congregation of 320 adults and 286 children, an afternoon one of 53 and 18 respectively, and an evening one of 490 adults – all no doubt including Favell Mortimer.<sup>5</sup> At Broseley, it was later said, Canon Forester 'laboured zealously on behalf of his flock and became popular as a preacher'. In 1859 he moved to Doveridge (Derbys.), later to Gedling (Notts.), and succeeded his brother to the barony in 1886. He died at York, where he was still Chancellor and resident Canon, in June 1894.<sup>6</sup>

In his 1892 letter, Lord Forester reveals how he learned details of Cardinal Manning's early years: 'I had them from a lady who was in early life an intimate friend of his. She was herself a very remarkably talented and interesting person, and for a few years a parishioner of mine when I held the rectory of Broseley...Mrs Thomas Mortimer...the authoress of those popular little books for children'.

The letter goes on to describe how Manning, a schoolfellow and fellow undergraduate of her brother Robert, met Favell Bevan on visits to the Bevan estate at Trent Park. There, as a result of long discussions and attendance at meetings, 'it was her conviction that this was the beginning of Henry Manning's religious life'. Apparently Manning 'always used to speak of her as his spiritual mother', and they corresponded regularly; but, following his conversion to Catholicism in 1851, he wrote to her at Broseley asking her to return his letters. This she did, but he kept hers. Lord Forester surmises: 'This correspondence, if still in existence, from two such persons as Henry Manning and my friend Mrs T. Mortimer would be most interesting. She was a remarkable woman, full of anecdote, and the most agreeable conversational companion it was ever my lot to meet. Her residence, as my neighbour, at Broseley, was a great gain to me, and she was invaluable as a help in the parish'.

In what is a long letter, Lord Forester mentions his own correspondence with Manning: first in the late 1840s, which 'ceased

when he crossed the border'; then some thirty years later, when he requested Manning's help in obtaining a particular book ('I said his old friend Mrs Mortimer and I had often talked him over. In reply he said he knew Mrs Mortimer well in former years; she was a very pious woman. He sent me the volume'); and finally in 1889, when Manning replied that he hoped they would meet if Lord Forester came to London.

For Favell Lee Mortimer, the Broseley years were only a small part of a very full life. But clearly, in those years, she made a deep impression on the Rector of Broseley and his parishioners.<sup>7</sup>

### Notes

1. A list of her books is given in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol.XIII (1922), pp.1022-23.
  2. Census, 30 March 1851, Town of Broseley, No.163.
  3. Outline of her life by Rosemary Mitchell in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).
  - 4.*The Times*, 20 January 1892. Lord Forester's letter, written from Willey Park, is dated January 18<sup>th</sup>. Cardinal Manning had died four days earlier.
  5. Congregation figures quoted in *VCH Shropshire*, vol.X (1998).
  6. Obituary, *Wellington Journal & Shrewsbury News*, 23 June 1894.
  7. In addition to the likeness on page 15 (an engraving by C.H.Jeens after a pencil sketch by G.Richmond, 1840-50), there is an albumen carte-de-visite portrait of Favell Lee Mortimer (mid-late 1860s) by Thomas Stafford Gowland in the National Portrait Gallery collection.
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## Broseley in the Local Papers

by Steve Dewhirst

*During the past few years the Society has been transcribing extracts from the Wellington Journal and other local papers held in the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Library, Shropshire Archives and Telford Library. These give an insight into everyday life as well as some of the more important local issues not covered in the published histories of the area.*

*Here we present a small selection from the 19th century. The full transcriptions are available on the Society's web site and in Broseley Library and currently cover 35 years of the period 1858 to 1941*

### Work

The law was very much on the side of the employer, with the employee having few rights. Simply leaving work without giving proper notice could result in a severe punishment:

*MUCH WENLOCK PETTY SESSIONS Leaving without notice.- Thomas Godwin, a slip maker in the employ of Messrs. Hargeaves and Craven, Jackfield works charged Joseph Collins with leaving his employ without the requisite notice. According to the complainant's statement, it appeared that on the 1st inst. he engaged defendant as a slip maker, and agreed to give him 5s. per kiln. He worked for him till the Saturday following, and received the money for two kilns, but did not come to his work again.- Sentenced to twenty-one days' hard labour. (10<sup>th</sup> September 1870)*

Mining was still an important activity and unfortunately accidents were a common occurrence, sometimes resulting in loss of life. Inquests were usually held in a local pub. There seems to have been an acceptance that injury was inevitable and that neither the employer nor working practices were to blame:

*ACCIDENT On Thursday last a young man named Geltung, in the employ of Messrs. Davies and Lloyd, met with his death by a fall of earth in the pit in which he was at work. It appears that was engaged in taking out the timber from the roof in a faulty part of the mine, where what is called an "horse's back" occurred, that about five tons of earth came down and crushed him in a fearful manner, causing instant death. An inquest was held on Monday and a verdict of accidental death returned. (6<sup>th</sup> February 1861)*

*An inquiry was held at the Bridge Inn, Coalport, on Saturday, by Mr. F. H. Potts, borough coroner, concerning the death of Thomas Goodall, who was killed on the previous day when working at Messrs. Exley's brick and tile works, Gitchfield, Coalport.*

*Mr. Jestyn Nicholl, junior inspector of factories, was present, and Alderman J. A. Exley, a member of the firm.*

*Jeremiah Goodall, father of deceased, stated that his son lived at Mornwood, Jackfield, and he was an assistant engineer, and had worked for Messrs. Exley and Sons all his life. He was 24 years of age.*

*Arthur Exley stated that he assisted his father Jos. Exley in the business.*

*On Friday afternoon he was watching the mill, which was grinding clay at the Gitchfield Works, and deceased was superintending the men at the mill. Witness saw Goodall jump from some scaffolding on to a girder. Deceased shouted, and immediately he saw that he was entangled with the little belt. Witness at once stopped the machine and engine. Goodall was got out of the machinery by some of the men- he was alive and asked for water. He could see he was badly crushed- his two arms were pulled out, and he died about 15 minutes afterwards. Deceased had no right to go on the platform whatever, nor on the top of the machine. He believed he went there to put the belting right.*

*Richard Price said he was working close to the spot where the accident occurred, and saw deceased walk on the scaffolding and step on to the casting above the mill, and caught the little belting to give it a start. Then he saw him fall on the large cog wheel.*

*John Smallman corroborated the last witness's evidence.*

*The Coroner said there was no doubt but what it was quite an accident, and what deceased's notion was they did not know, and the only verdict they could bring was accidental death. Deceased had no right to be where he was and thus paid the penalty. Verdict, "Accidental death."*

*Deceased was buried on Sunday at the Broseley Cemetery, when a large number of his fellow-workmen followed his remains to the grave.*

*(19<sup>th</sup> August 1899)*

In 1858 the building of the Severn Valley Railway was about to start. To aid construction the contractors used a paddle steamer to haul barges full of materials on the river, but at first things did not go too well:

*COALPORT - THE STEAMBOAT "CHRISTINA".- The little steam tug passed up the river on Wednesday last. Considerable difficulty was experienced in getting her up the ford. First she ran aground, where she stuck most resolutely, refusing for some time to budge an inch. When ultimately hauled off, and about to face the current, she struck off to the*



*The Chirstina at Bower Yard. After the incident at Coalport she was successfully modified.*

Courtesy IGMT

*men. There are upon the unimproved portion of the river about 14 fords, and natural wears, caused by the rocks, which from their hardness resist the action of the water.*

*(6<sup>th</sup> October 1858)*

*opposite side of the river, defying all attempts of the helmsman, and pulling down to the water's edge the men who had a guide rope out at the side. In addition to the latter, a tow rope was required to get her up the ford. There is no chance, therefore, in the present state of the river, that she will be able to tow barges. In still water she makes way in a lmira le style, and may, in a greater depth of channel, be competent to make way against the stream. Steam-boats along the improved portion of the river, from Stourport to Gloucester, answer admirably, and have quite superseded horses and*

## Leisure

Broseley was well off the beaten track and did not have the advantages of large cities where the populous could easily travel to the theatre and music halls. The main sources of entertainment were the regular events held in the Town Hall and other halls in the town, as well as those arranged by the chapels..

*A RICH TREAT.— It will be seen in other column that Mr C Rowe, the astonishing blind elocutionist, will recite from memory, without prompter, book, or ether assistance, Shakespeare's famous tragedy of Macbeth. We unhesitatingly declare Mr Rowe to be one of the marvels of the age. (6<sup>th</sup> March 1880)*

There is still an annual fair held in Broseley. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century this was held in T. Instone's field off New Road next to the School:

*THE FAIR.*—The annual pleasure fair was held on Tuesday last, but the glories of bygone days were sadly wanting, the fair being of very limited dimensions and of a decidedly gingerbread character. Stalls of edibles and toys, a shooting gallery or two, a photographic studio, with swings, a peepshow and cocoa-nut alleys, comprising the attractions. During the day the attendance was very small indeed, but it increased toward the evening, being swelled by the parties returning from Bridgnorth races.

(1<sup>st</sup> May 1880)

There were no paid holidays and bank holidays were not compulsory, but the employers in Broseley seem to have been generous:

*BANK HOLIDAY.*—Monday last was observed as, a general holiday here, the various tradesmen closing their shops for the day, many of the working class migrated to other parts, a few left for Manchester &c., &c. The weather throughout was fine and warm, great credit is due to the tradesmen and others for their liberality in suspending business for the day and we trust their workpeople are none the less grateful for the boon. The weather was fair throughout and all past off well.

(22<sup>nd</sup> May 1880)

The Gospel Rooms was the meeting place for the Plymouth Brethren, and when they left this became the Victoria Hall:

A “people’s entertainment” was held on Thursday, at the Gospel Rooms, when there was a crowded attendance. Mr. Suart presided, and Mr. H. H. Wase conducted the singing. Programme:—Glee, “Vesper Chimes,” choir; pianoforte solo, “Harps Eolienne,” Miss E. Suart; duet, “Silver moonlight winds are blowing,” Miss Nevett and Mr. Garbett; reading, “The Family Umbrella,” Mr. Cartwright; song, “Alone in the World” (violin obligate), Miss Bartlam; violin duett, Messrs. Nicklin and Wilson; glee, “Village Blacksmith,” choir; song, “The Snowdrop,” Miss Nevett; reading, “Women’s Rights,” Mr. Cartwright; song, “A Summer Shower,” Miss Bartlam; pianoforte solo, “Alice,” Miss E. Suart. (29<sup>th</sup> January 1890)

There were various bands in the district. Most have disappeared but the Jackfield brass band is still going strong; however, its origins were somewhat different:

*JACKFIELD DRUM-AND-FIFE BAND.*—The members of this band, attired in appropriate uniform, visited Broseley on Saturday, and



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*paraded the principal streets, playing excellent selections of music in good style en route, under the able direction of their trainer, Mr. Homer Wase.*

(3<sup>rd</sup> August 1895 )

## Crime

The main police station was at Ironbridge, where there was a sergeant and a number of constables. They seem to have regularly patrolled the district looking for miscreants. The most common summonses seem to have been for drunkenness and the use of foul language.

Serious cases were heard at the County Court in Madeley, but most were dealt with at the Magistrates Courts which met alternately in Broseley, Much Wenlock and Ironbridge. A regular offence was poaching, there being a number of regular offenders. The harsh punishment does not seem to have acted as a deterrent:

*NIGHT POACHING.—Joseph Jones and William York, both of Ironbridge, and well-known poachers, were charged with night poaching at Benthall, on land belonging to Lord Forester. Mr. F. H. Potts prosecuted.—Richard Kitson, gamekeeper, stated that when he was out watching with another keeper and Police-constable Harris he came in contact with the prisoners. Jones shouted to them to stand back and then fired a gun, the charge going between him and the constable.—The prisoners pleaded not guilty.—The Mayor, in sentencing the prisoners to three months' hard labour, said they both had bad records, and Jones should be thankful that he was not being sent to the Assizes on the charge of murder. If they failed to find sureties of £20 they would be further imprisoned for six calendar months.*

(1<sup>st</sup> December 1894)

It would also seem that youth crime is not a new thing, and there were cases of what would now be called hooliganism even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

*A POLICEMAN'S SON CHARGED WITH STONE THROWING.—Ernest Cumpstone, six years of age, son of P.C. Cumpstone, of Broseley, was charged by Mr Maw with throwing stones in the highway at Broseley, on the 7th inst. On being put into the box, above which the little fellow's head did not reach, the Clerk spoke to Mr Maw, who said he was not aware when he took out the summons that the child was so young. The facts of the case were that on the afternoon in question Mrs Maw was driving down Barratt's Hill, when she was struck by a stone, which he produced, on the arm, which caused a bruise for several days*

*after. On looking round she saw a lot of boys, many of whom were bigger than the defendant, and this boy was pointed out to her as having thrown the stone, and his identity could be readily proved, but as the boy was so young he did not wish to press the charge, but as this stone throwing had become so common, and was so dangerous, he thought perhaps the Bench would give the lad a caution.—Mr Lawndes gave the lad a reprimand, and hoped the father would see the importance of taking more care of his children, and keep them out of the streets. The case was then dismissed.*

(19<sup>th</sup> June 1880)

Corporal punishment was the norm. Parents did not always take responsibility for the action of their children, but the magistrates seem to have enforced punishment even if they did not particularly like it:

*A DIFFICULT CASE.- It will be remembered that at a previous court two little boys were charged with stealing coal from Mr R Jones's pit bank at the Willey Collieries. The option was then given to the parents of paying the costs, that the boys might not be convicted. This, in the case of William Tench, the parents refused to do so, and the boy was now brought up on warrant. The Mayor strongly condemned the inhuman conduct of the parents whom he believed to be more blamed than the boy, and ordered him to receive six stripes with a birch rod, and to be imprisoned at the Wenlock Police Station for two days.*

(1<sup>st</sup> January 1881)

The Amateur Dramatic society has been part of the town for many years:

*AMATEUR DRAMATIC CLASS.—This is the title of a class now commencing in this town and the first performance, "Bombastes Furioso," will be given in Easter week, forming the concluding part of a grand concert to complete the season. Mr W. Close will fill the position of secretary and Mr Geo. Davis, juur., that of hon. treasurer. With these two names we have a guarantee of success, and we heartily wish the class a prosperous career.*

(9<sup>th</sup> April 1881)

## **Everyday Life**

There was no social security or old age pensions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. People continued to work well after the current retirement age of 65. For those who could not work there was some charity but this seems only to have been given at Christmas:

*CHARITIES.*—On St. Thomas's Day, 46 poor widows received a ticket for warm clothing, varying in value from 5s. to 7s. each, from the Pritchard Charities, and 19 old men a flannel waistcoat each from the Oare Charity. At Christmastide 30 widows received 4s. each from the Cotton Charity, 4-5 poor persons 1s. 6d. each from the Barrett Charity, and 32 received 3d. each from the Langley Charity. Eighty-five poor men and women received 1s. each from the proceeds of the offertory at the Parish Church on Christmas Day. In addition to the above 53 garments, sent from the Shropshire Ladies' Needlework Guild, and two dozen rabbits from Lady Forester, were distributed to the poor and sick in the parish. From 50 to 60 aged poor men and women also received a dinner of beef, plum pudding, and mincepies from a few private families connected with the Parish Church on Christmas Day. The whole of the above charities were distributed by the rector (Rev. G. F. Lamb).

(5<sup>th</sup> January 1895)

When the weather was freezing the local brick works temporarily shut down, resulting in the employees not receiving any wages. This resulted in much hardship:

*RELIEF TO THE POOR.* At a public meeting held in the Town Hall on the evening of the 31<sup>st</sup> ult., it was decided to distribute soup, bread, and coal to the deserving poor during the present inclement weather, the first distribution taking place at the Gospel Rooms on Saturday morning, under the superintendence of Messrs. John Dixon (High Street) and Wm. Edge (Hockley Road House).

(9<sup>th</sup> February 1895 )

As well as reporting important developments, such as the provision of a water supply to Broseley which took some 20 years, it also reported some surprisingly trivial incidents:

*ACCIDENT.* — On Wednesday, as Mrs. Poole was attending to her household duties, she accidentally fell and broke her ankle.

(9<sup>th</sup> March 1895 )

Although we are currently concerned with Global Warming, the summer of 1895 must have been particularly hot and sunny:

*DEATH THROUGH SUNSTROKE.*—Amid much grief, the remains of the late Mr. W. Miles (Speed's Lane), were interred in the cemetery on Wednesday, the ceremony being, performed by the Rev. G. P. Lamb (rector). Some time last week Miles was working in a hay-field for Mr.

*R. Jones, when he received sunstroke, which ultimately caused his death. Deceased leaves a widow and large family to mourn his loss.*

(6<sup>th</sup> July 1895 )

Floods in the Gorge have been a continual problem and 1899 was no exception:

*WIND, RAIN, AND FLOODS. The fierce south-westerly gale which prevailed on Saturday and Sunday caused extensive damage in various parts of the country. In Shropshire its effects can only be described as most disastrous. In the low-lying portions of the county the floods have been more extensive than have been known for years, vast tracks of land being submerged. ....*

*At Iron-Bridge, owing to the rapid rise of the river, people who lived near the Severn had to seek refuge in other houses. The water was on the Wharfage and vehicular traffic was stopped. The Severn foundry was flooded and the men could not work. Cellars along the Wharfage were filled with water, and so was Mr. Poole's shop. As for the White Hart Hotel no one could approach it. In the bar the water rose rapidly. Several people sat up all Sunday night and were afraid to go to bed. Crowds have come from all parts of the district to witness the great flood-the largest for 12 years. The flood in February, 1881, was 9 inches higher than the present one, and on May 15th, 1886, it was 8 inches lower than in 1881.*

*The main roads at Jackfield were covered with water, and some of the people, had to live upstairs. The passage boats were of little use and the bridges have the extra pedestrians.*

*The floods at Coalport reached as far as some of the shops in the famous china works, consequently the work had to be partially suspended.*

(28<sup>th</sup> January 1899)

*GENEROSITY.— Messrs. Dunnill & Co. presented all the householders who had the flood in their houses with 5 cwt. of coal each, an act which was much appreciated.*

(4<sup>th</sup> February 1899)

Much of life revolved around the church and various chapels. As well as spiritual comfort they provided education and entertainment:

*MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY.—On the evening of the 29th ult. an entertainment consisting of songs and readings was given by the members of this society in the Wesleyan Schoolroom, under the genial*

*presidency of Mr. B. Stuart (Alison House), who delivered an appropriate address in his usual effective manner. Mr. J. A. Hartshorne presided at the harmonium with his usual efficiency.*  
(6<sup>th</sup> February 1897)

One of the main events recorded in the papers were weddings. These are described in some detail and are of particular interest to those researching family history:

*WEDDING. – On Wednesday Broseley was astir on the occasion of the marriage of Miss Emily R. Jones, third daughter of Mr P. Jones of The Rock, Broseley, with Mr W. Francis of Broseley. The time appointed for the ceremony was 11 o'clock, and by this time All Saints' Church was nearly filled with spectators. The bridegroom was accompanied by his best man, Mr H. E. Morgan of Hereford. The bride entered the church and was escorted to the altar by her father, who gave her away. She wore a fawn cloth costume with hat to match, and a turquoise silk blouse, trimmed with gold passementrie and chiffon, and carried a shower bouquet. The bridesmaid was Miss May Jones sister of the bride. Miss Hilda Watkiss played a selection of music on the organ, and on leaving "The Wedding March" was given. The ceremony was conducted by the Rev. J. Richardson of Manchester. After breakfast, the wedding pair left by train for London, amidst showers of confetti and the good-wishes of the guests and friends. The presents, numbering over 70, were both useful and valuable.*  
(18<sup>th</sup> February 1899)

## **Politics**

Broseley was in the Borough of Wenlock. However, in 1876, as a result of a re-organisation, it got its own elected District Council which was eventually responsible for such things as water supply, sanitation, road maintenance, street lighting etc. The Board, although elected, was dominated by works owners and businessmen and its outlook seems to have been particularly parochial.

It was many years before a proper sewerage system was provided for Broseley, so the Board regularly had to deal with what were euphemistically called 'nuisances':

*A NUISANCE.—A letter was read from Dr. Boon calling attention to a nuisance in the Bull Ring, Foundry Row, Broseley, where there were five cottages with only two closets, near the front doors. The waste water was also poured into the cesspit, which was untrapped, and the*

*stench from it was dreadful, this being a source or great danger to the inhabitants in the warm weather.—On the motion of Alderman Exley, the surveyor was instructed to serve notices on the owners to remedy the nuisance.*

(7<sup>th</sup> August 1897)

The quality of the water supply was a common item on the agenda at council meetings. A scheme had been proposed in 1880 but the lack of political drive, penny pinching and the fact that the members of the council seem to have had a good supply themselves appears to have led to a large degree of lethargy on the part of the council. Although some improvements had been made by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, things were coming to a head; but it was not until 1902 that piped fresh water was supplied to the town from Harrington:

*THE WATER AT LILY WELL.—The Surveyor submitted a report he received from Mr. Blunt, regarding the water at Lily Well. It stated the water contained a large quantity of organic matter, but not of a dangerous character. The condition of the water was bad, and could not hardly be regarded as a good one for drinking purposes.—Alderman Exley thought the water was taking the wrong turn.—Councillor Mear remarked that it was supposed to be the best water in Broseley.—Councillor Prestage considered the matter a serious one.—The surveyor was requested to forward the report to Dr. Gepp (medical officer) asking his opinion on the matter.*

(19<sup>th</sup> March 1898)

By the 1880s the church cemetery was becoming full and a new burial ground was needed. In 1881 land was purchased and a new cemetery built with aid of a government loan:

*The memorandum of agreement for the purchase of the Board from Major General Jenkins of an acre of land, portions of the Duckhouse and Brandlee Meadow (near the Catch gate) for the sum of £175, excluding the minerals prepared by Messrs. Potts and examined by the clerk was read and the seal of the Board attached.*

*It was also decided that the Clerk should write to several architects asking for plans and estimates of the necessary walls, frontage, and mortuary chapel.*

*The Clerk was also directed to make enquiries as to the terms on which the money (estimated at £1000) could be raised so as to make the repayment run over a series of years.*

(7<sup>th</sup> January 1882)

Land stability is much in the news at present, with the £5m stabilisation work at the Lloyds just completed and a new slip having recently occurred by the Black Swan, Jackfield. However, there have always been problems with land stability, but fortunately these days the inhabitants are not asked to pay directly for the work:

*THE SLIP NEAR JACKFIELD CHURCH: The Chairman mentioned the question of the slip near St Mary's Memorial Church, Jackfield, and stated that Mr Maw had estimated the cost of a new road at £200, of which Messrs Maw offered to contribute £50, General Jenkins £50, and he had no doubt the Board would do the same, and perhaps the inhabitants of Jackfield might get together and subscribe the remainder.*

(19<sup>th</sup> February 1881)



*Jackfield soon after the construction of the Severn Valley Railway and before the construction of Craven Dunnill's Factory. The road just below the church is the one mentioned in the cutting. Stability here was a continual problem, the road finally being closed in 1983 after yet another slip*

Courtesy IGMT

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## Memories of a Shropshire Lad, part 4

By Dennis Mason

*In this fourth extract from his memoirs (written in 1990) Dennis looks at the local friendly societies and vividly describes living conditions in the area*

### The Friendly Societies

For nearly a century and a half, until the advent of the National Health Service, the friendly societies had played a valiant part in banding together working people in an attempt to relieve the worst of hardship attendant upon sickness and death. They had started in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and some of the early ones were merely Burial Clubs, to enable a poor man's dependants to give him a decent funeral. They grew considerably in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and towards the middle of the century were regulated by Parliament, notably by the Friendly Society Act 1846, which set up a Registry of Friendly Societies to which they had to belong. By 1913 the various friendly societies had six and a half million members.

Broseley was very prominent in the world of friendly societies, probably because they had their origin in industrial areas, which indeed the area was in the early Industrial Revolution. Under the National Insurance System started by David Lloyd George in 1911, the 'approved' friendly societies were appointed as agents to carry out the scheme and to distribute its benefits.



*Broseley Oddfellows J Griffiths collection*



The principal societies in Broseley were the Independent Order of Oddfellows, the Ancient Order of Foresters and the Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes. All, as with the other societies, had resounding names and officials with grandiose titles, colourful regalia and impressive badges of honour and office. It was almost as if the drabness of working class life in those days could not quite suppress the hunger for colour and glamour that lay latent in a deprived working population.

Half a century ago the friendly societies were enjoying their heyday. Their venerable history gave them an eminent respectability and they played a valuable part in the life of the community and were in the forefront of charitable work. In our district this mainly took the form of support for the local hospitals.

Their lodge nights were on Saturdays, always at one or other of the local pubs. There is a curious combination here of high-mindedness and, if not insobriety, at least a healthy appreciation of the products of barley and malt! Each society had a special room in which were kept the regalia, records and a desk and gavel for the chairman. There was generally a shutterhole in the door and those attending lodge meetings were required to give the secret knock and utter an approved language formula before being admitted to the meeting. Another relic, this, of the days when meetings of working people were illegal.

Members of such societies, when sick, received a club payment of 10s. to 15s. weekly during the period of their sickness, in addition to the meagre State sickness pay, and in those days this amount was very valuable indeed.

It was possible to be entered as a 'juvenile' in most of the societies at the age of eight or nine. The payments until one became of more mature years was very small. But being a 'juvenile' produced one important bonus - the Juveniles Summer Outing! This, like most of the local outings, was to Church Stretton or Shrewsbury or somewhere not far away; but once we went to Wolverhampton, which was by far the biggest place most of us had ever seen and inhabited by a people with a strange language which we could not understand! However, a fulsome tea was provided in a real restaurant. On 'days outings' no one ever went to a cafe or restaurant, for they were far too expensive, and everyone took their 'tommy' with them in the shape of packed sandwiches and home made cake. On those occasions, when tea was provided at a restaurant, the officers of the lodge who accompanied us assumed demigod



*Hospital Sunday Parade*

proportions in our eyes. How could anyone have so much money to spend? The Chancellor of the Exchequer could not have impressed us more!

One of Broseley's important days of the year was Hospital Sunday, a day in the summer when all the local friendly societies organised a great parade and church service. The parade assembled in Broseley Wood, near the King's Head, the headquarters of the Buffaloes and a mile from Broseley Church, and, headed by the Jackfield Prize Silver Band, marched to the church. The parade did not simply consist of members of the friendly societies in their colourful scarves and chains and medals, but the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, the Territorials, St. John's Ambulance Brigade and the Fire Brigade. Now the Fire Brigade may not have been the acme of efficiency, as may be gathered from another chapter of this work, but it looked very resplendent in its uniform. This was a navy blue with red cuffs and piping, a leather belt with an axe in a leather case and a wonderful shining helmet, sometimes of brass and sometimes silver-coloured, with a curved front like that of a cuirassier and an impressive metal chin strap. As a child I found the firemen the most impressive element in this colourful procession, and all were big, solid, ruddy-faced men who marched ponderously but with enormous dignity and elan through the streets of our village.

The Territorials were generally in charge of Company Sergeant Major Jack Jones of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, looking very spick and span in

spite of his lack of inches. Many of the Territorials were local lads and so it was something of a family gathering of the military.

The occasion was considered important enough to be attended officially by the Mayor and Corporation of Wenlock (Broseley in those days was part of the ancient Borough of Wenlock, the country's largest borough in area). Top hats and morning coats were the order of the day then, no workingman having then aspired to local honours, and the Mayor's party joined the procession at the old Town Hall, as did the officiating clergy in academic gowns and hoods.

Those were the days before the National Health Service. We were fortunate in our district that we had two small hospitals one at Broseley and one at Much Wenlock, which had been built and subsidised by a generous minded Lady Forester at the beginning of the century. The hospitals needed any extra they could get and the sum from the Hospital Sunday collections went towards their running costs. Weeks before the Hospital Sunday parade collecting boxes were placed in all the local public houses. They were collected in on Hospital Sunday and great rivalry existed as to whose box contained the most. It was a great slur on the clientele of a particular pub whose box had been 'light'. Other boxes were handed to members of the Friendly Societies who preceded the parade and, with much rattling of coinage, considerably added to the collection from the crowds gathered along the long route of the march.

The advent of the National Health Service over 40 years ago put paid to the Hospital Sunday and dealt a serious body blow to Friendly Societies in general. These societies still perform a useful function but the sheer basic needs upon which they were originally based have been largely removed. It was with great sadness a couple of years ago that the remaining few members of the Broseley Branch (Rose of Sharon Lodge) of the Oddfellows were compelled to wind up the Lodge after 150 years and transfer its members and assets to the thriving Ludlow Lodge, which has since been transferred to Cleobury Mortimer.

### **Living Conditions**

There was not a lot to be said for the local cottages. They were for the most part brick structures that had been erected in the days of the Industrial Revolution. Many would have earned the title 'jerry built', except that they were all built of local bricks, which were extremely durable. They were almost all extremely small and the wonder was how so many large families were raised in them. Their chief virtue was their

gardens, which in most cases were quite extensive and in some cases enormous. Whether Broseley's reputation as a village of distinguished gardeners was due to this factor or that large gardens were added to the houses because of its reputation, I do not know, but I imagine the former.

The rooms of the houses were tiny and cramped in the extreme. There were no kitchens in the modern sense of the word, only what were known as 'sculleries' where one both cooked and washed, the latter activity in a brick and tile sink. Most houses did not have running water. A few had wells and most of the rest drew their water from stop-taps in the roads. Some of these were quite artistic affairs, the water emerging from the mouth of a lion's head. Bathrooms were unknown and only a very, very few houses had water closets which were usually outside. As a child I, lived in a house with a most unusual refinement, an inside soft water tank getting its supply from the roof and piped to 'the scullery'. I have never come across this very useful service since.

A few of the better workingmen's houses had parlours. These were only used on very special occasions, but the basic reason for this was economic, the cost of extra coal and gas being prohibitive. Sometimes these rooms went for years without being properly used, though they usually contained the choicest articles of furniture. Nevertheless, even if they weren't used much they were kept scrupulously clean and polished.

The sanitary arrangements were crude at best and horrific at worst! The more superior workmen's cottages had earth closets well removed from the house, sometimes at the bottom of a long garden. Terraced houses usually shared these abominations, sometimes three houses to one 'convenience'. They were frequently in a semi-derelict state, and holes in the walls through which the occupants could watch the goings on in the outside world (and be similarly watched) were common. A visit to one of these erections on a dark, cold wintry night was something of an adventure. From time to time the pits belonging to these revolting places were emptied. The hardy souls who did this were known as 'night soil men' and, in case I still have any readers left in this chapter, I will refrain from describing the methods used in emptying these hell pits. Suffice to say that everyone's windows and doors were tightly sealed during this activity!

There was no organised refuse collection until about 45 years ago, when the local council employed a man with a horse and cart to go round periodically and empty the refuse dumps in the district. Every house or

group of houses had one of these disease breeders. They were open-topped brick enclosures into which all rubbish refuse and ashes were tipped. These ghastly things were known locally as 'mixens' and I can remember the sickly stench that emanated from them. Before the Council organised an occasional collection, the onus lay on the owner or tenant to have them emptied, which meant that many were not emptied for years on end.

Conditions like these did not encourage cleanliness and some of the rougher elements lived in quite awful squalor; but most struggled heroically against their environment and kept their miserable little hovels spick and span, and their clothes and persons clean and tidy. Cleanliness, indeed, was held to be the great dividing line between 'the respectable' working people and 'the others', and a very common saying then was "Soap is cheap enough", which indeed it was then. Fancy soap was too

dear for most people. Bars of crude yellow scrubbing soap were used alike for scrubbing the floor and the person, though carbolic soap was favoured by many for washing. Floors were often washed with 'soft soap', an evil looking and vile smelling mixture, which was sold in large round tins and looked like axle grease. The day of the detergent had not arrived.



*It must be Monday!. Hanging out the washing at Salthouses, Jackfield in the 1950s*

Friday night for such people was 'bath night', when a galvanised bath normally hung on the wall outside was pressed into service before the kitchen fire (the kitchen was the name given to the living-room). This created some difficulties, but they were overcome with surprising efficiency, the women of the house contriving to have their baths when the men were out, and if they weren't going out they were sent out!

The weekly clothes wash was something of a ritual. The better houses had a washhouse attached to or near the house. Echoes of an earlier age were in the name 'brewhouse', which is what these buildings were more commonly called. Each had a small flue above which was a brick-enclosed iron boiler. The clothes were boiled in this and then transferred to a large wooden 'dolly tub'. The 'dolly' was an enormous wooden implement with handles which was pounded up and down on the clothes. I have often been amazed that some of the more fragile women found the strength to lift this instrument of torture, let alone pound it on the clothes for half an hour at a stretch. Reckitt's Blue was universally used for sheets and other white articles and produced a whiteness with which many of the much-advertised detergents could not hope to compete. This article was also the unfailing remedy for wasp stings, and indeed was very effective.

Monday was invariably the washday and, if the weather was wet, men came home from work to find the living room festooned with drying washing. Monday was therefore anything but a popular day. The lady of the house would almost invariably be tired and irritable, small wonder after half a day's 'dollying' followed by an equally heroic struggle with the 'mangle'; this was a huge iron wringer with great wooden rollers and a handle as big as a chaff-cutter, which required real strength to get through bulky items like sheets.

Electricity was then years away and most houses were lit by gas, though some and all of the outlying cottages were lit by oil lamps. Most houses had a penny meter and great grumbling took place on how little gas one got for a penny; though really it wasn't bad measure at all, but pennies were in short supply. The only other lighting was by candles and, as few bedrooms had gaslight in them, one went to bed accompanied by a candle in a candlestick, occasionally an antique model but more often a cheap, enamelled affair bought for a few pence in Ironbridge Market.

The cleanest people would occasionally pick up a flea, which launched its most savage attack in the warmth of the bedclothes. Hunting for these little brutes by candlelight was something of an adventure, besides a considerable fire hazard. One of the greatest benefits of modern insecticides and a general higher standard of cleanliness has been the almost complete annihilation of these horrible little pests, which could play havoc with anyone with a sensitive skin.

# Friendly Societies' Hospital Sunday.

(Friendly Society Members urgently requested to attend).

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL

## Church Parade

Of the Broseley & District Friendly Societies

WILL TAKE PLACE

**ON SUNDAY, SEPT. 16th, 1923,**

When Divine Service will be held at 3 o'clock in the Afternoon,

In the Broseley Parish Church,

And a SERMON preached by the

### REV. J. S. JOBLING

(OF BRIDGNORTH).

The Offertory will be devoted to the Salop Infirmary, Shrewsbury Eye and Ear Hospital, Iron-Bridge Dispensary, other Charitable Institutions, and the Lady Forester Hospital.

All Members of Friendly Societies are invited to join the movement, and are requested to meet at 2 p.m., in a field kindly lent by Mrs. Matthew Davies, Broseley Wood, from which place the Procession will start, and march through the principal streets to Church.

The Mayor and Members of the Council, and Honorary Members, meet at the Town Hall, at 2-30 p.m.

#### A COLLECTION EN ROUTE.

Marshals: J. H. CROSS, A. G. TAYLOR, A. HUMPHRIES, J. J. GARBETT.

#### ORDER OF PROCESSION:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1—Jackfield Prize Silver Band          | 7—Honorary Members                      |
| 2—4th Batt. K.S.L.I.                   | 8—Female Lodges                         |
| 3—Comrades                             | 9—Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes |
| 4—1st Jackfield St. Mary's Girl Guides | 10—Order of Oddfellows                  |
| 5—Fire Brigade                         | 11—Order of Foresters                   |
| 6—Mayor and Members of Council         | 12—Members of other Societies           |

Members to wear White Gloves. Scarves and Collars may also be worn.

The attendance and co-operation of all friends is earnestly solicited.

J. WATKINS, Chairman of Committee.

J. BURNS, Treasurer.

J. WILDE, Vice-Chairman.

T. MINTON, Secretary.

Arthur Meredith, Printer, Church Street, Broseley.