

S. Dewhirst

This was a coal and Pennystone Ironstone mine. There was a smaller coal mine to the south (SJ 6739 1214) also known as Cockshutt Lane Colliery. At various times Robert Evans leased the minerals at both sites so it sometimes not clear which mine is being referred to in contemporary references.

Given the size of the mound, the pit would have originally been wound by a steam engine sited at the bottom of the mound. The latter working had buildings between the shafts, probably a steam engine and boiler, plus an ancillary building. A weighing machine (bridge?) was also located at the bottom of the mound. On closure, buildings were demolished and the pool filled, but the mound was left untouched.

It survives as a large wooded Pennystone clay mound now forming part of Birchmeadow Park. Footpaths have been created on the mound, but they are unlikely to have disturbed any archaeology. There are no above-ground remains of shafts or buildings, but foundations probably remain buried.

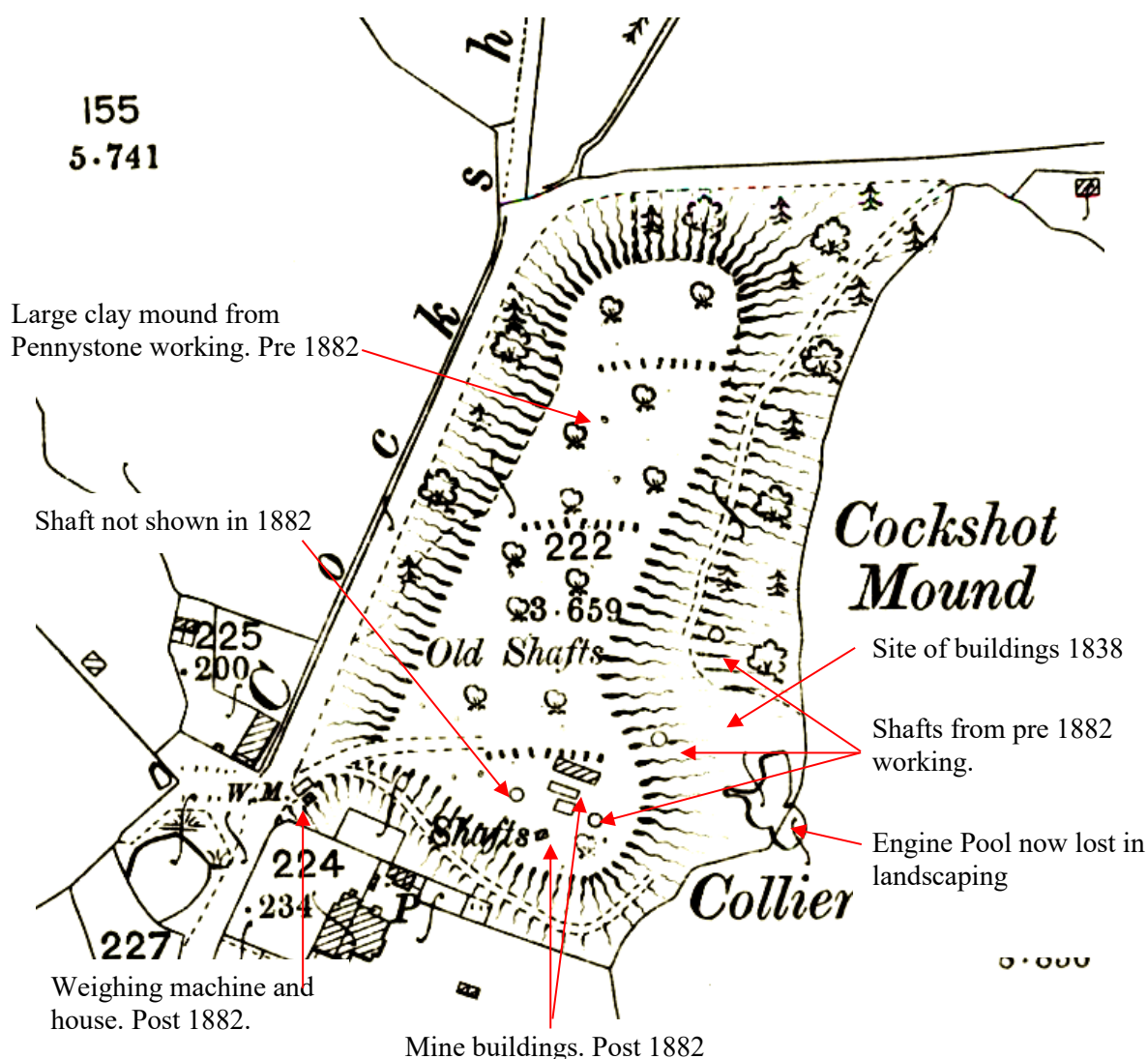


Figure 1: Main features of the site on the 1902 25" OS map sheet Shropshire LI.2

## History

The mound occupies a field originally known as Barn Meadow and was part of the Cockshutt Lane Estate. In 1784, George Bradley of Little Wenlock purchased the estate from Thomas Pratt of Dunclett, Stone, near Kidderminster. Bradley later sold all the mineral rights — including coal, limestone, and ironstone beneath his estate — to Alexander Brodie for £2,000. When Bradley died in 1796, he left the estate in trust to his daughter, Catherine Gurnall, wife of John Gurnall of Pimlico.

In 1811, George Forester of Willey purchased the Cockshutt Lane Estate from John Gurnall. At that time, the land was leased to John Morris and Thomas Birch (manager of the Barnetts Leasow Furnaces).<sup>1</sup>

In 1817, Broad Meadow was part of an area leased to Robert Evans of Rudge Wood and his son Robert of Broseley, master colliers from Cecil Weld Forester.<sup>2</sup>

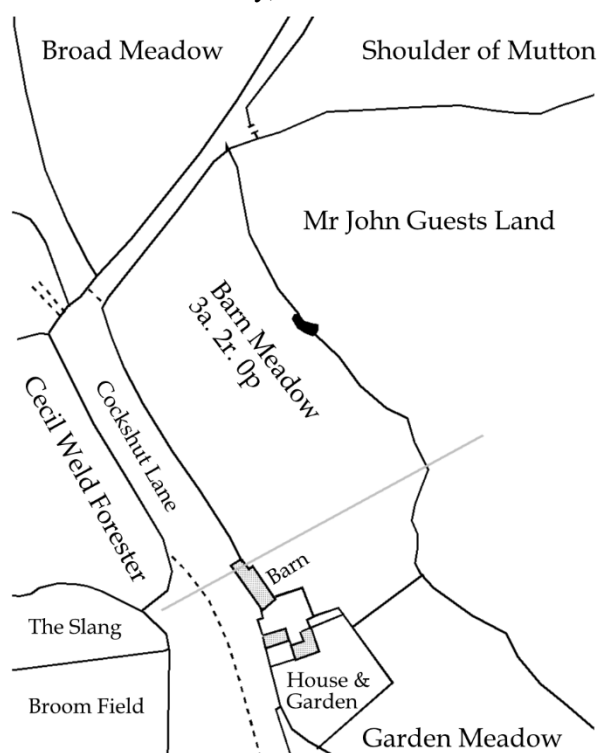


Figure 2: Part of the Cockshutt Lane Estate in 1818. Barn Meadow became the site of the Cockshutt Lane mound, the acreage being almost the same as shown on the later OS maps. Although mines were shown on other parts of the map at the 'Fishers' adjacent to Broad Meadow, none are shown in Barn Meadow. John Guests' Land is part of the Birch Meadow. From Shropshire Archives 1190/4/180/6.

In 1819, John Onions senior died, and the inventory of his business taken in August 1820 included an engine worth £120 at Cockshutt Lane but not necessarily at this site.<sup>3</sup> At that time, the Broseley Furnace had stopped working, and he was shipping ironstone to his furnaces in Brierley Hill. The 1838 the plot was no longer called Barn Meadow the barn had been demolished and the Tithe Apportionment listing the plot as 'Cockshutt House Piece now Stone-pit & Spoil Bank.' In 1842, Onions was paying half-yearly rent of £34 6s 9d for the Cockshutt Lane coal and slack and in 1845 was paying £73 6s for Cockshutt Land and Caughley, coal, slack and clay.<sup>4</sup> These rents would have been based on a per-ton royalty for the mineral mined and would have required a weighing machine at the colliery.

John Onions died in 1859, by which time he had probably given up working the mine. By 1863, it had been acquired by William Orme Foster, when he was prosecuted for employing a 15-year-old boy to drive the winding engine:

Information under the Colliery Act.—Roper v. W. Foster, Esq.: Mr. James appeared in support of the information, and stated that this was one of those cases in which,

after the evidence which he should be enabled to lay before the bench, he should submit that they would be justified in indicting the full penalty of £50.- Mr. Anstice, at that point, said. Before you proceed further with the case, have you any objection to my taking part in the adjudication of this question, as it may be hereafter that I might come under the same ban? -Mr. James had no objection to offer. —The charge was that on a certain day, to wit, the 30th of July last, a lad under the age of fifteen had been employed in managing a steam engine used for the purpose of working coal and men up a vertical shaft. Mr. Pierce, agent to Mr. Foster, applied for an adjournment on the ground that he wanted to procure legal assistance. —Mr. James opposed the application. The summons had been served a week, and that afforded ample time to procure legal assistance. This not having been done, the application could not be granted. The bench refused the application. —Mr. Pierce said that the pit in question was not a coal pit; it was used to get ironstone from. - Mr. James said it mattered not.- The bench asserted the Act applied to all pits. — Mr. James called Mr. Pierce (who had not been summoned as a witness). He deposed that Mr. Foster was the owner of the Cockshut-lane pit, Broseley. It was worked by a person named Bullock, as charter-master. — Abraham Roper, informer, said: I live at Bilston. On the 30th July last visited the pit at the Cockshut-lane, about a quarter past four in the afternoon. Andrew Taylor was with me. I then saw a boy in the care of the engine. I saw two handfuls of men come up the pit. They were drawn up by the engine from the shaft. It is a vertical shaft. On the second handful coming up to the top the men were suddenly jerked, and much frightened. It appeared that chain, caught in the horns of the shaft, around which the chain coiled. The men were very much frightened. The lad who was minding the engine called to Andrew Taylor to go and bank the fire under the boiler. He (the lad) was frightened also. The boy's name was Meredith. I saw bags of coal and ironstone drawn up the shaft of the pit.—Andrew Taylor said: I live at Bilston. I went with Abraham Roper to the Cockshut-lane pit, in Broseley, on the 30th July last. The lad Meredith was minding the engine. I saw ten handfuls of men brought up the pit. There was a jerk in the chain when the second handful came up. The men were much frightened. The lad asked me to bank the fire under the boiler. He seemed much frightened. —Mary Meredith: I live at the Rock, Broseley. My husband's name is Samuel. This lad is my son. His age was fourteen last April. A certificate of the lad's age was produced. - Mr. Pierce said that Meredith's lad had been employed to work the engine for three or four months. He was not then aware of the Act of Parliament prohibiting a at of his age from minding an engine. As soon as he became aware of it he removed him, and put a man in his place.- In answer to the bench, Mr. Pierce said he did not intend to shift the penalty on to the back of Meredith. Had not told Meredith of the matter. That is, he did not inform him that he was acting contrary to the Act.—The bench said that this was not a case in which they thought that the full penalty should be inflicted. The lowest penalty allowed by the Act would be sufficient to meet the case. Fine of £20. —Mr. James applied for costs and charges, reminding the bench that under the 17th section of the Act one-half of the costs and charges, as well as half the penalty, went to the informer, and the other half to the poor rates. The cost and charges amounted to £1 12s., which was allowed.<sup>5</sup>

The Wellington Journal gives some extra information stating that the offence was employing a boy under the age of 18 to drive an engine, also stating that the coal and lime were drawn up the shaft in skips. His mother was also said to have given his age as 14 next April rather than last April.

The only boy with a mother named Mary Meredith in Broseley at the time was John Meredith, who on the 1861 census was described as an engine driver at a Stone Pit and aged 16. His father and younger brother William, aged 10, were ironstone miners, possibly at the Cockshutt Lane mine. There is, however, a discrepancy regarding his age as John, the son of

Samuel and Mary, was baptised on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1845, making him 18 at the time of the offence, not 14 as stated, but he had been driving an engine since he was 16!<sup>6</sup>

Foster closed his last Broseley ironstone mine in 1880, and the Cockshutt mine is shown as disused in 1882.<sup>7</sup>

In 1902, C(harles) R(ichard). Jones is listed in HM Inspectors' report as sinking a shaft at Cockshutt Lane, and the 1902 OS map shows it as a working colliery with new surface buildings and a weighing machine. An additional shaft is also shown, which is presumably the one sunk by Jones. The mine is not listed in the 1906 Inspectors report, suggesting that it had a very short working life. The 1927 OS map lists the mine as disused, and everything except the weighbridge house had been cleared.

The mound was put up for auction in 1927 as part of the land disposed of by the Forester Estate, but when it became part of Birchmeadow Park is not known.<sup>8</sup>

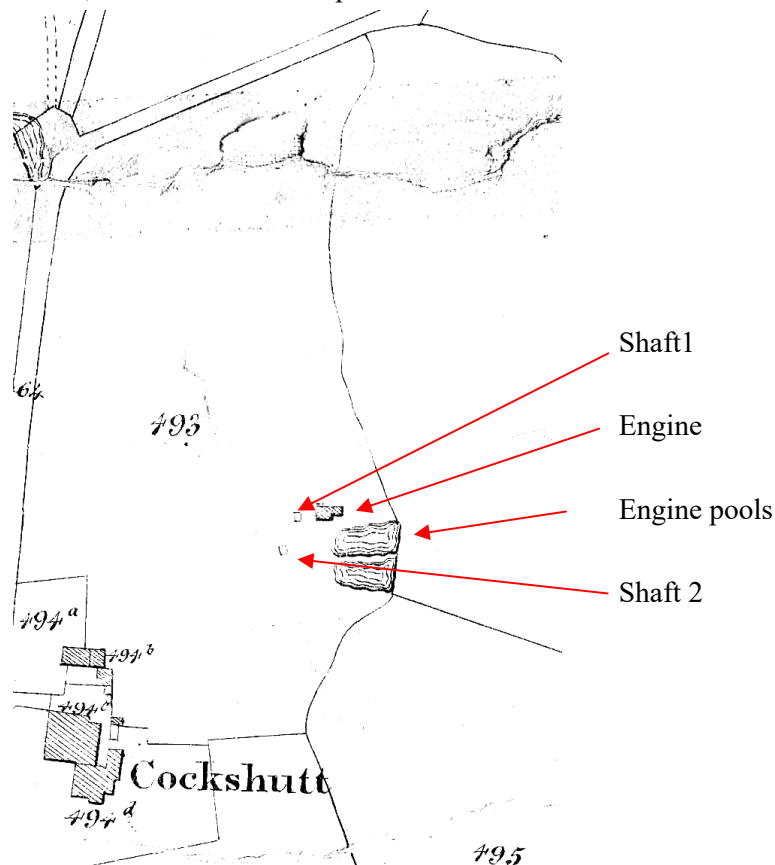


Figure 3: Broseley Tithe 1838 (Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust) . Plot 493: Cockshutt House-piece now Stone-pit & Spoil Bank. Plot 493 Land owned by Lord Forester, occupied by John Onions, rent 6s.

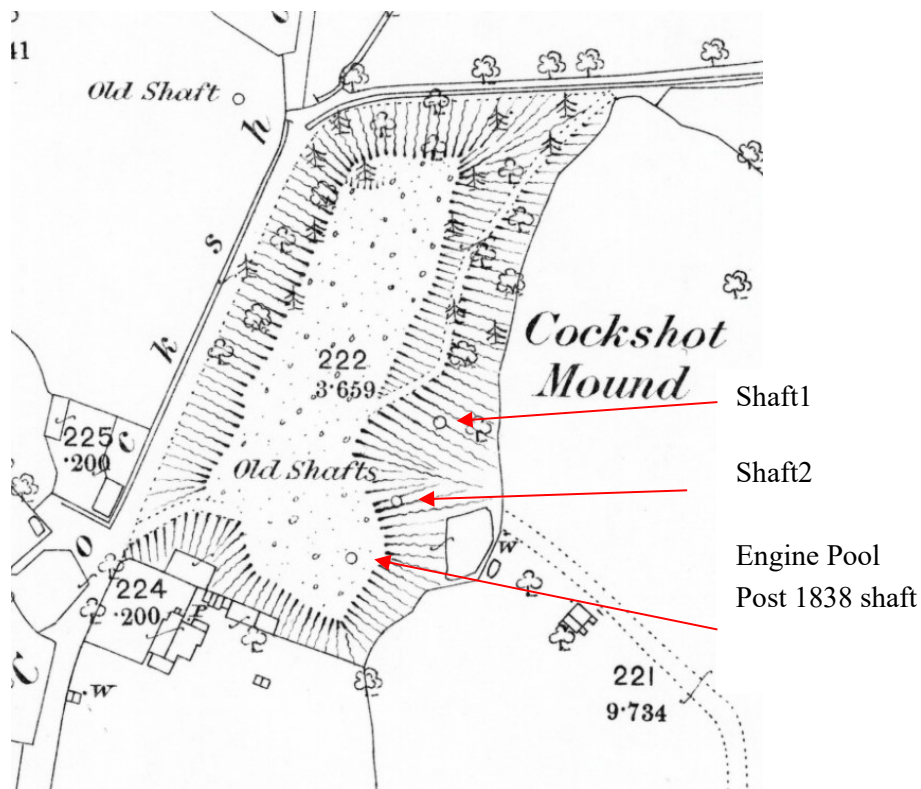


Figure 4: 25" O. S. Map Shropshire LI.2 Published: 1882. This shows a disused ironstone pit with no buildings. A shaft has been sunk at the top of the mound since 1838 which is at a typical location for Pennystone mines.

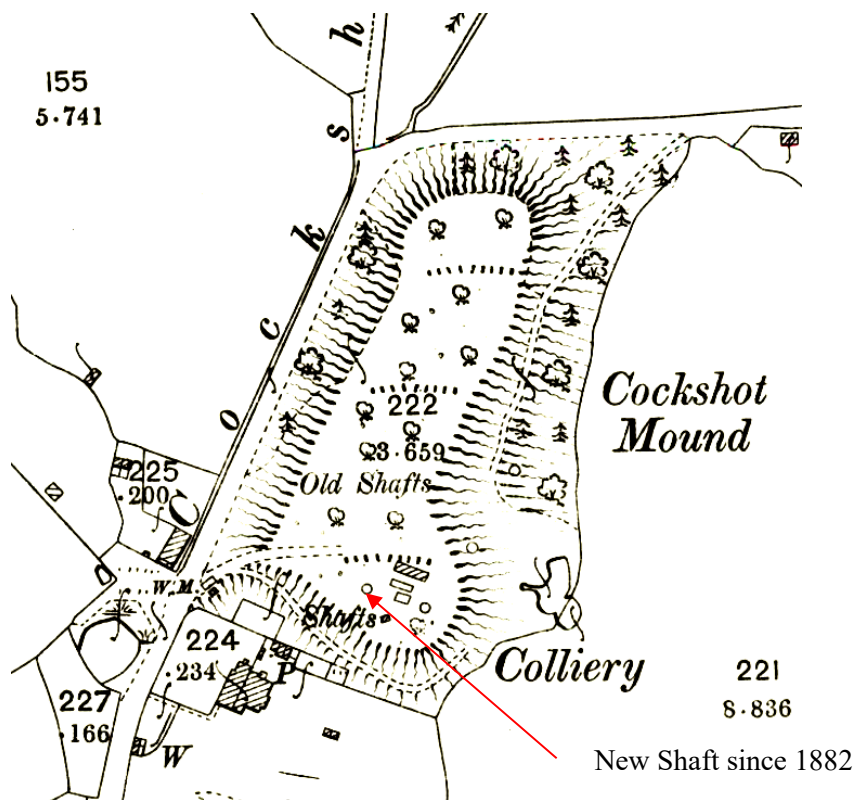


Figure 5: 25" O. S. Map Shropshire LI.2 Published: 1902. This shows new buildings and an additional shaft at the top of the mound for a mine which was working at the time of the survey.



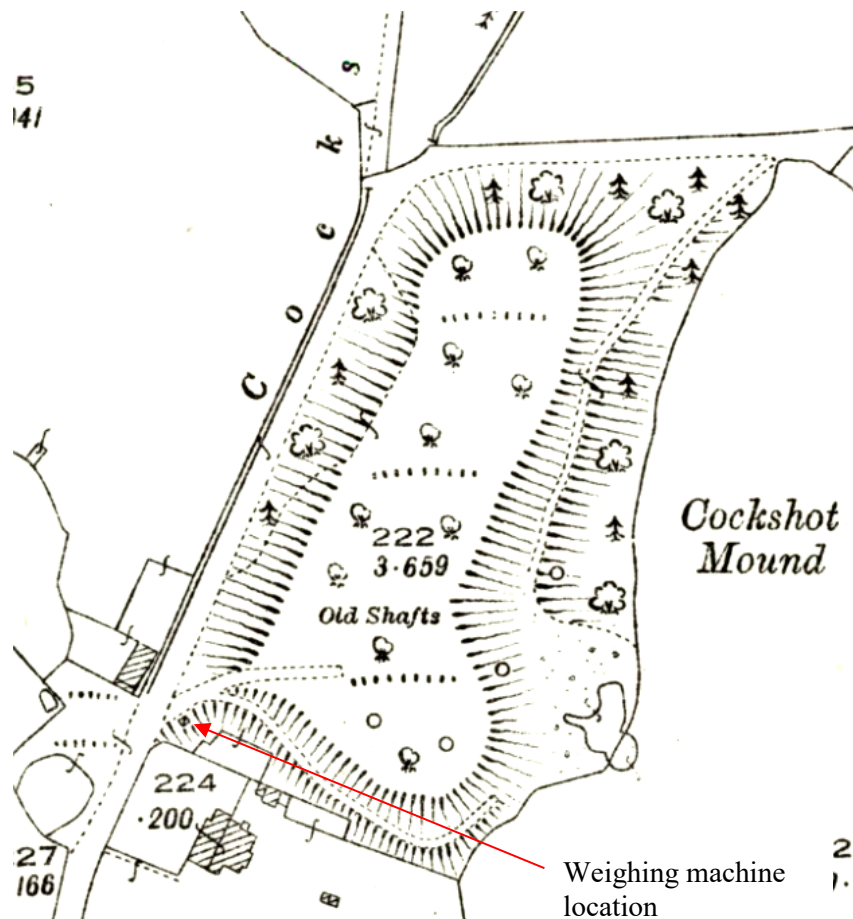


Figure 6: 25" O.S. Map Shropshire LI.2 Revised: 1925. Published: 1927. The mine buildings, except the weighbridge house, have been demolished. All four shafts were visible at this time, presumably covered with a brick beehive dome.

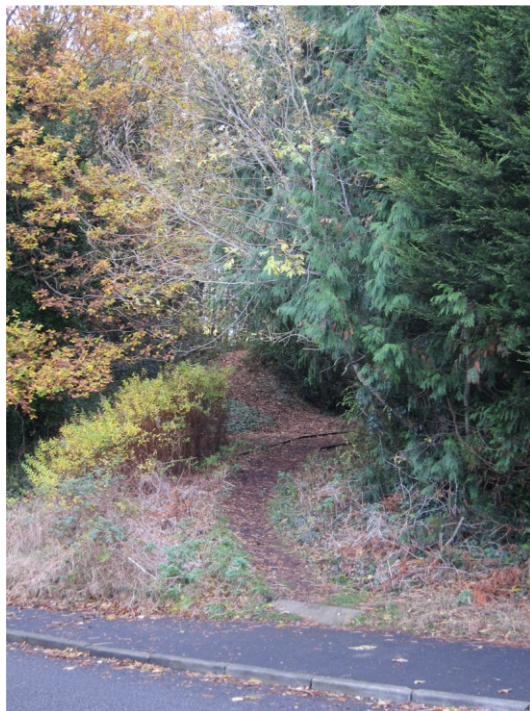


Figure 7: Cockshutt Mound from Cockshutt Road. The site of the Weighing Machine and track to the mine.



*Figure 8: Cockshutt Mound from the Birchmeadow playing fields.*

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<sup>1</sup> A full history of the land can be found in the index to the Forester records 1224/3/622 to 647.

<sup>2</sup> Shropshire Archives 1190/1/180

<sup>3</sup> Shropshire Archives 1190/4/265.

<sup>4</sup> Willey Estate Rent ledger. In private hands.

<sup>5</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle 30<sup>th</sup> October 1863

<sup>6</sup> John is the only person in the correct age group in Broseley who has a mother called Mary.

<sup>7</sup> Ironbridge Gorge Museum 1984.369. Stock of materials at the Calcutts works 1859-1882.

<sup>8</sup> Map – Sale by Auction by Perry & Phillips at the Town Hall, Broseley. On Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1927.