



**FRODSHAM AND DISTRICT
HISTORY SOCIETY**

JOURNAL



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Compiled by: Kath Gee, Sue Lorimer and Heather Powling

Journal of
FRODSHAM AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY

Issue No. 48 November 2018

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Front cover picture:

To mark the centenary of votes for women, the theme of Heritage Open Days 2018 was 'Extraordinary Women'. In Frodsham we were able to celebrate the life of Harriet Shaw Weaver, granddaughter of Edward Abbot Wright of Castle Park. Harriet was born at East Bank (now Fraser House), Bridge Lane on 1st September 1876. The family moved to Hampstead in 1892 when Harriet's mother, Mary Berry (Wright) Weaver, inherited a considerable fortune on the death of her father. Harriet became a staunch campaigner for women's rights as well as an important figure in avant-garde literary circles. She died on 14th October 1961. From FDN1856 cheshireimagebank.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Officers:

Mr Brian Dykes, Chairman; Dr Kath Gee, Hon.Secretary; Mr David Fletcher, Hon.Treasurer.

Committee:

Mrs Margaret Dodd, Membership Secretary; Mr Frank Whitfield, Programme Secretary; Mr Andrew Faraday; Mr Brian Keeble; Mrs Pam Keeble; Mrs Heather Powling; Mrs Beryl Wainwright; Mrs Betty Wakefield; Mr Tony Wakefield.

Ex-officio Member: Mrs Gill Baxter, Archivist

Welcome Ladies and Gentlemen to the latest History Society Journal – and again it's full of interesting articles we hope you enjoy reading. This year has been another good one for the Society with a further increase in membership which I like to think is due to our very good lecture programme on a wide variety of topics as well as the Society's additional activities which promote the value of heritage in our local community. You will find the 2019 programme at the end of this Journal.

Sadly our oldest member, John Miller, passed away peacefully in the summer. John's paternal grandfather was Charles Edward Linaker JP and Chair of Frodsham Parish Council who lived at Rock House, 48 High Street. His grandmother was the daughter of James Rigby, creator of the Bellemonte Pleasure Grounds. There is an edited version of one of the eulogies from John's funeral service later in the Journal.

We thank Kath Hewitt and Joan Douglas for their respective contributions to the Society and wish them well in their retirements but hope they will continue to attend our meetings as honorary members. We warmly welcome Gill Baxter to the team as our new enthusiastic Archivist.

I offer my sincere thanks to all the hard-working committee members with named roles: Kath Gee, David Fletcher, Margaret Dodd and Frank Whitfield; they ensure the Society runs smoothly and efficiently throughout the year. We are extremely grateful to Andrew Faraday for his expertise in helping speakers to set up their presentations; to Heather Powling for organising the refreshment rota and all our members who have willingly helped serve them **and** left the kitchen tidy! We appreciate Betty and Tony Wakefield's generosity in hosting our committee meetings, and, Pam and Brian Keeble's work in producing a second booklet for members entitled '*Stories behind the pictures 2018*'.

Many of you joined our 2018 summer visit to the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, for a guided tour & afternoon tea. It was greatly enjoyed by our members and a revelation to many of us. Two of our party were able to add personal anecdotes – one recounted their childhood visit to see Roy Rogers & Trigger at the Empire Theatre – followed by Roy Rogers & Trigger **in** the Adelphi Hotel! Another of our party recalled details of his summer as a wine waiter to international guests in the World Cup year of 1966. Both accounts were relished by our guide who promised to include them in future tours.

Brian Dykes, Chairman

FOUNDING OF FRODSHAM & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Arthur R Smith

In the early 1980s I was a founder member of the Frodsham and District Local History Group. There were four founder members – Howard Talbot, Richard Martin, Derek Heckle and myself. Our first meeting took place in Richard's house in Beech Avenue. We discussed what form the society should take, where the meetings should be held and on which day of the week. It was decided that we should meet once a month (except in August) on a Monday evening at 7.30pm. It was agreed that the venue should be Castle Park Arts Centre when the conversion of the old Coach House and Stables building was finished. In the meantime it was agreed that we should hold our meetings in the Frodsham Community Centre. At the end of this first meeting we decided to hold our next committee meeting at Howard Talbot's father's house at Aston near Sutton Weaver.

Three or four weeks later we held the second meeting to establish the founding of the History Group. Three things stick out in my memory about this occasion. Firstly that there were far more people present – probably invited by Howard Talbot. Secondly that the dining room of the Talbot's dowager's house was a very imposing place. (In 1936, Howard's father had decided that the maintenance of Aston Hall was beyond his means and had it demolished.) The walls of the dining room were covered in old paintings of the family and the estate. Thirdly I remember that it was a very cold room. There were a number of large radiators but there was no heat coming from them and so most of us sat with our outdoor coats on.

During the meeting various proposals for the History Group were considered but the main business was to elect a chairman, a secretary and a committee. Richard Martin was chosen as the Chairman and I was appointed as the Secretary. After this the History Group flourished and we had numerous meetings with some fine speakers – for example H F (Bert) Starkey, Paul Booth (Liverpool University), Alan Waterworth, Philip Andrews, Bill Hawkin and Dr David Owen. Besides our programme of speakers every month, we started to undertake various other projects. For example, I suggested that we should do the research and publish a history trail for Frodsham. So in 1984 we started to gather information about some of the most important historic buildings in Main Street, High Street and Church Street. I remember writing to Charles and Jean Birtles who lived at Millstone House on Main Street and they invited me to visit their house. I couldn't believe what a fascinating building it turned out to be with its stone and timber framed walls and its fine inglenook fireplace. This experience was repeated in several other historic buildings and in no time at all we had enough interesting material to write and illustrate a history trail for the centre of the town. This booklet was soon published by a firm in Chester and with the generous sponsorship of a good number of shops, businesses and the town council, we had covered the cost before we had sold a single copy! *Discovering Old Frodsham*¹ was the first of a series of booklets that the History Group published in the next few years. Others were *Discovering Castle Park*², *Discovering Helsby*³, *Discovering Mersey View*⁴ and *Discovering Frodsham's Old Schools*⁵ - all of which I think were well received by local people.

Although out of print, copies of booklets 1-5 may be borrowed from our Archives. For titles of other books and materials in the Archives see frodhistoryarchives.co.uk

THE PICKERINGS OF FRODSHAM BRIDGE

Sue Lorimer and Heather Powling

Keen-eyed visitors to St Laurence Church may have noted that there is an inscription at the base of the large east window. It is difficult to read because most of it is obscured by the reredos screen installed in 1916, some 25 years after the stained glass window was restored. The window was given by Mrs Ellen Pickering in memory of her late husband, John Rigby Pickering and her brother, Robert Wainwright Ashley.

By the 1880s four generations of the Pickering family had dominated the industrial sector of Frodsham Bridge in corn milling, salt manufacture and trade in coal, lime and tiles. Through marriage they were connected to the cream of Frodsham society and also to wealthy corn merchants in Prussia. Two Pickering brothers, William and Peter, married two sisters, Carolina and Emilia Steffens, daughters of Danzig merchant Carl Steffens.

Pickering is an old Cheshire family based mainly round the Daresbury area. Robert Pickering, a barrister of Gray's Inn, London, who was born in Daresbury in 1619, bought estates at Northwood Park and Crowley near Arley and the manors of Hatton and Thelwall in the mid 17th century. He made Thelwall the family seat and the family crest can be seen at the Pickering Arms in the village.

The Pickerings of Frodsham hail from Crowton, where their name is still connected with the ancient ford on the River Weaver known as Pickering's Lock by Pickering's O The Boat. This was the place where, before the advent of canals, salt was loaded from packhorses onto barges for transportation to Frodsham, Liverpool and beyond. Just how the Crowton Pickerings are related to those at Thelwall is not clear.

John Pickering, born in Crowton in 1744, married Mary Harrison in 1765. Their first two children were born in Crowton, but by the time their daughter Nancy was born in 1768, John had taken the tenancy of Beech (or Beach) Mill, in Bradley, Frodsham. In addition, in 1784, he took the lease of a new mill under construction at Sutton, then part of the Arley Estate.

Corn Millers

There already was a small mill at Sutton, rented by Sutton Hall Farm, but in the early 1780s the Arley Estate decided to build a new high-powered corn mill on the site of an old cheese warehouse on the banks of the River Weaver. The warehouse was no longer required as most cheese was being distributed along the canal network. John oversaw the construction of the new mill (one of the largest in Cheshire) and a new home for the family (presumably Mill House, listed Grade II and now in a sad state of repair). The Arley Estate records contain an invoice dated July 1782 from Henry Gardner to Sir Peter Warburton for 'drawing a plan of the intended mills'. Invoices from 1786/7 refer to stonework undertaken at the mill and the paving of new roads.

Before the house was completed the family lived in a warehouse at the mill and it was there that John's youngest son, Peter, was born in 1785. The house was presumably finished by 1790, as Peter, in his memoirs *The Diary of Peter Pickering*, describes a visit by his aunt and uncle, who were obviously part of the "Cheshire Set" of the time and unlikely to visit a warehouse.



FDX0141 Mill House, Sutton Mills c.1900

The old, smaller mill was retained. A newspaper report In November 1804 described a fire that *destroyed the extensive water corn-mills and thousands of measures of corn belonging to different persons* and that *these mills were the property of Sir Peter Warburton of Arley Hall*. Fortunately the mills were insured and were rebuilt.



FDN 1749 Sutton Mills c. 1940

The story of local mills and the trade in corn at the end of the 18th century is important because by then Britain's agriculture could no longer meet the demand for grain. The country depended on imported corn to provide bread for its growing population. The unpopular Corn Laws controlled trade in wheat from abroad and resulted in high prices at home. This meant that when English grain was in short supply because of bad harvests, it was still expensive to import from abroad. The bad harvests of the 1790s, coupled with the strict blockade on continental wheat during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-15) resulted in desperate poverty in the countryside and led to bread riots in many parts of the country. It was a period when new mills were built and corn merchants were permanently looking for new sources of grain.

In Frodsham, John Pickering's sons, Thomas 1765-1814, and Samuel 1766-1811, took over the management of Sutton Mills from their father, who returned to live at Beech Mill where he died in May 1814.

In 1794 Samuel married Alice Rigby, whose brother George was also a corn dealer in Frodsham. They had two sons, Samuel 1805-1820, and John Rigby Pickering 1799-1880, as well as two daughters, all of whom were christened in Frodsham. At the time of his death in 1811, Samuel Pickering was not only in partnership with his brother Thomas, but also with Samuel Chadwick, corn dealer of Sutton, who eventually owned Daresbury Hall. Samuel Pickering probably dealt with the day-to-day running of Sutton Mill. He left his estate to his wife Alice and after her death to his surviving children. Alice died in 1844.

Thomas married Margaret Horabin, daughter of William Horabin, maltster and innkeeper of Frodsham Bridge. Nine of his eleven children were christened in Liverpool where according to his will he owned another mill. The two younger children were Lydia, christened in Runcorn in 1811 and Edmund 1813-1814, christened in Frodsham, suggesting that Thomas returned to run the mill at Sutton after his brother Samuel's death in 1811.

Thomas died in January 1814, a few months before his father. As well as his interest in Sutton Mill, he left mills, malt kilns, land and houses in Liverpool, Runcorn and Frodsham. At the time of his death his estate was the subject of a law suit, probably concerning ownership of the various properties. The outcome of that suit is not known but by 1829 the management of Sutton Mill was in the hands of Thomas's sons, William and John.

The mills were advertised for let in August 1829, perhaps due to the failing health of William, who sadly died on 9th September 1829 aged only 31. He was described in an obituary in the Chester Courant, as *a young gentleman of the most elegant demeanour and amiable disposition, whose benevolence and humanity excited the general esteem of an extensive circle of friends*. His brother John died in 1834 aged 33.

By 1831 the mills, then owned by the Aston Estate, were rented by Samuel's son John Rigby Pickering, who was in partnership with his cousin, James Rigby. John married Ellen, the sister of Robert Wainwright Ashley of Ashley House, Main Street, in 1841. They had no children and for many years lived at Ashley House with Robert and another sister, Elizabeth Ashley. James Rigby resided at Mill House, Sutton.



FDN1946 c.1990 Ashley House, Main Street, Frodsham

The partnership of John Rigby Pickering and James Rigby was dissolved in 1852 and James, after spending a few years as manager of the Neston Colliery, returned to Frodsham and established the Bellemonte Pleasure grounds at Overton.

John Rigby Pickering died in October 1880, but when he gave up his interest in Sutton Mills is uncertain. The number of millers listed in the census returns indicate that the mills were being worked in 1861 and 1871, but in 1871 Mill House was occupied by James Lowe, a retired farmer, son of Henry Lowe of Sutton Hall.

John Rigby Pickering's death was recorded in the Parish Magazine of November 1880:

... we have to mourn the loss of a man whom we could ill spare - a man within whom burned a most fervid desire for the parochial good. The event which has deprived us of the familiar face and venerable form of one so highly respected as Mr John Rigby Pickering is too recent and too deeply sorrowful for merely a passing allusion. ... Incapable of a sordid or ignoble thought, no man ever went to his rest leaving behind him a golden memory more pure from dross, or having devoted himself to the parochial offices which he held with a truer sense of duty.

The Vicar's sermon of 17th October also referred to Mr Pickering: *I feel that God has taken one who had identified himself with the well-being and the prosperity of Frodsham, one who had endeared himself to us all ... we shall miss his kindly smile, his genial greeting.*

John Rigby Pickering had given generously to the funding of the restoration of St Laurence Church by Messrs Bodley and Garner. After his death, his widow gave the stained glass for the large east window which, according to the Restoration Accounts of 1880-82, cost £413. 17s.0d. The window was designed by Burlison and Grylls, one of the most well-known stained glass firms in the country that were also responsible for the rose window in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey.



The east window, St Laurence Church, given by Mrs Ellen Rigby in memory of her husband and her late brother as part of the restoration of the church in 1880-82

Sutton Mills had been unoccupied for a number of years when in 1879 Thomas Rigby and Sons (no relationship to previous Rigbys can be established) took them on. They were probably converted to steam and later to electricity by Thomas Rigby. It again became one of the largest in Cheshire, and was taken over by J Rank, millers of Liverpool in 1926, which in turn merged with Hovis MacDougal in the 1960s.

There were other family interests in corn milling. John Pickering 1774-1814, the third son of John and Mary, was also a miller. He owned a wind corn mill, warehouse, stone quarry and two houses in Runcorn which had to be sold in 1804 when he was declared bankrupt. The property was probably purchased by his brothers William and Samuel as a mill in Runcorn was mentioned in Thomas's will. The lease of this wind mill was up for tender in 1819, applications to Mrs Alice Pickering. A copy of a painting of the windmill at Runcorn can be seen in Starkey's book *Old Runcorn*.

As a result of the bankruptcy, John decided to emigrate to Philadelphia to try to establish himself as a corn merchant there. John was married to Hannah Farrall daughter of Thomas Farrall of the Bear's Paw and his first wife Margaret. John and Hannah's first two children died young and are buried in Frodsham. Hannah and their remaining four children joined John in America in 1808. A further child, John, was born in America but there the story ends.

Slate, Coal and Timber Merchants and Brick Manufacturers

Joseph, the fifth son of John and Mary, was also originally a corn merchant. He was declared bankrupt in 1807. He married Ann Hayes, daughter of William Hayes Snr, shipbuilder and slate merchant in 1802. Perhaps influenced by his wife's family, Joseph changed his profession. Pigot's Directory of 1834 lists Hayes (William jnr) and Pickering (Joseph), slate and timber merchants, Frodsham Bridge. Joseph died in 1839.

Joseph and Ann had three sons, William 1804-1845, James 1805-1860 and Edward 1807-1848. From 1842-1845, James and Edward owned 2/3rds of Horns Mill in Helsby. Edward died in 1848 and James, by 1850, was a merchant dealing with salt, timber, coal, bricks and tiles. He died in 1860 and both of them were unmarried.



Pickering family grave, Parish Church of St Laurence

The eldest son, William, started his career as a brick maker in Frodsham Bridge and was listed as such in Pigot's Directory of 1834. When the Salt Works, founded in 1773, was put up for sale in 1832 following the death of Thomas Urmsen, William Pickering changed his career to become the proprietor of the Salt Works. He built a new house for himself there in 1836. His brothers, James and Edward, were also involved in the business. William died in 1845. Although the Salt Works was advertised for sale the following year, James was still listed as proprietor in Bagshaw's Directory of 1850 and he sold it in 1856 to the Chancellorsville Freehold Gold Mining Company.

William Hayes Pickering, William's only child, was just 12 years old when his father died and had only just reached 21 when his mother, Elizabeth, died too. He lived with his grandmother, Ann Pickering by the Salt Works. In 1861 Ann farmed 54 acres. William Hayes Pickering became a coal and lime agent, working from a depot at Frodsham railway yard. He lived at Rock View, High Street and died unmarried in 1906.

Marriages

John and Mary Pickering also had four daughters. The eldest Nancy, born in 1768 married Samuel Mouldsdale, a wealthy merchant of Frodsham in 1789. She died in 1790 soon after giving birth to a daughter, Mary, who died in infancy. Samuel then married Nancy's younger sister, Elizabeth, but she too died in 1797 following childbirth. Samuel married for a third time in 1809 but had no further children. In 1813 Samuel sold a cotton factory in Frodsham and at the time of his death in 1834, he owned a steam corn mill in Runcorn, the purchase no doubt influenced by the Pickering family.

Mary 1772-1837, John and Mary's third daughter, married William Yarwood, a druggist from Witton, Northwich in 1793. They had two sons but only John, lived to adulthood. Mary is buried in Frodsham.

Sarah (Sally) born in 1776, John and Mary's youngest daughter, married Peter Rigby in Yarmouth, Norfolk, in 1803. Little is known about her life other than two of her children were born in Deal, Kent, but christened in Frodsham. It is possible that Peter Rigby was Lieutenant Peter Rigby of the Royal Navy who commanded the gun brig "Urgent". Both Yarmouth and Deal had naval bases at that time. This could explain why Sarah was married in Yarmouth rather than her home parish.

John and Mary's last three children were all boys. James born in 1778 was taken ill at home in Sutton in 1794. Despite treatment from the local doctor, Dr Hulley, James died weeks before his 16th birthday. Their youngest child Peter 1785-1865 was once betrothed to the daughter of Dr Hulley but the engagement was broken off.

We have already seen that there was a constant search for new markets in grain and for the Pickerings, this led to family links with Europe. The majority of wheat imported into Britain came from Prussia at the turn of the 18th century. The two youngest sons of John Pickering were, perhaps, the most adventurous. When William 1782-1855 was sent to Danzig to purchase grain in 1799, he took with him his 14 year old youngest brother, Peter. The idea was that Peter would learn 'Germanic languages' as well as something about the world of trade. They were well-received in wealthy merchant circles and became acquainted not only with the Baltic merchants, but also with the Gladstones, merchants from Liverpool and the family of future Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone. Peter Pickering was taken into the merchant house of John and Robert Gladstone to learn accounting on his return. William Pickering married Frederika Steffens of Danzig in 1813 and five years later, Peter married her sister Emelie. Their father, Carl Steffens was one of the richest corn merchants in Danzig and owned a large house on the Lange Market. The house still stands and is one of the tourist attractions of the city.



The Steffens House, now called the Golden House, in The Lange Market, Danzig



Peter and Emelie Steffens

William Pickering brought his wife to England and they settled in Liverpool, where he became a well-known merchant and Consul to Mecklenburg. Peter and Emilie bought an estate outside Danzig which had once belonged to Emilie's grandparents and brought up a large family of 10 children there.

As a family with long-standing connections to Frodsham and its surrounding area, the Pickerings had made and lost fortunes in the corn trade for more than 100 years. Their ventures into other trades were, perhaps, more successful and contributed to the economic prosperity of Frodsham and Frodsham Bridge. Though the mills have long since ceased to exist, the East Window at St Laurence is a fitting tribute to their role in Frodsham life and reflects the esteem in which the family was held.

Sources

Frodsham and District History Society Archives
Arley Hall Archives 1750 - 90
The Restoration of Frodsham Parish Church, 1880 - 2, commemorative centenary booklet
Family history online: ancestry.co.uk; FindMyPast.co.uk;
<http://pickeringfamilyhistory.com/peter1.php>
Photographs courtesy of cheshirimagebank.org.uk
Local trade directories
Family information provided to St Laurence Church by descendants of the Pickering family (2003)
St Laurence Parish Church Parish Magazines

THE GABLES, 52 MAIN STREET, FRODSHAM

It is widely thought that 'The Gables' was built in 1763 for John Urmson, one of the founders of the Salt Works at Frodsham Bridge. However recent scrutiny of the deeds of that property has found no mention of his name. In fact the owner in 1763 was a William Johnson of Aston Grange, who sold it to his son John for £260. It is thought that John lived in the house as he owned a pew at St. Laurence Church. In 1773 when the original lease for the land for the Salt Works was signed, both John Urmson and William Crosbie were said to be merchants of Liverpool.

Charles Buchanan, a local cheesefactor, bought 'The Gables' in 1775 and it is possible that he lived there prior to the purchase. From 1794 Ann Ashley, widow of Robert Wainwright Ashley lived there. It is possible that John Urmson did live at 'The Gables' at some point but there are very few years unaccounted for.

When John Urmson died in 1801 he was a widower and his only son Thomas had predeceased him by six years. He therefore left his interest in the Salt Works to Thomas's sons, Thomas, John and William. As they were all children at that time, John's son-in-law James Ryder was paid £100 per annum to manage their interests until they reached the age of 24. John's daughter, Maria Ryder inherited all the household effects but he left his house to his son's widow Sarah, for her use in her lifetime. Sarah died in 1824, and the house was put up for sale in May 1825. This house had 7 acres of land, 4 bedrooms and a dressing room on the first floor and a further 5 bedrooms in the attics. It does not match the details of 'The Gables'.

William died in 1815 and John in 1821 leaving Thomas presumably the major shareholder in the business. Thomas had married Ann Whitley of Alvanley in 1810 and with their 11 children lived in a house adjoining his mother's. Thomas died in 1831 and both houses, the Salt Works and Bridge Farm were advertised for sale or to let. Both houses had 8 bedrooms each and had outbuildings and gardens and according to the advertisement were surrounded by picturesque scenery. Again these descriptions do not fit anywhere in the centre of Frodsham and the tithe map shows houses next to the Salt Works.

Ann Urmson returned to her home village of Alvanley where in the 1841 census she was at Church House Farm, farming land traditionally leased to the Whitley family. In 1851, however, there were Urmsons at 'The Gables'. Thomas and Anne's daughters, Anne, Maria, Georgina and Harriet, great grandchildren of the original John Urmson, were living there but the house was then owned by Sarah Barlow Glazebrook nee Collins, daughter of the Revd John Collins of Frodsham. Sarah had inherited the house from her first husband, Henry Edward Fawcett, who had purchased it from his brother, Revd Rowland Fawcett of Scaleby Castle near Carlisle.

So the conundrum is: where did that original information that 'The Gables' was built for John Urmson come from? There must be some evidence somewhere, as it is so entrenched in the history of Frodsham.

Any suggestions to the editors, please.

JAMES HULLEY OF FRODSHAM

Eighteenth century surgeon and apothecary

Sue Lorimer

On Monday 5th March, following the A.G.M. Ms Claire Moores spoke on *Physick, Pothercary and Chirurgeon*, explaining the origin of these professions.

In the late 18th century, James Hulley was the surgeon and apothecary in Frodsham and is listed in Cowdrey's Directory of Chester 1789. He was born in Macclesfield in 1752 and was an apothecary there when he married Betty Ridley in Prestbury in 1773. A son, Thomas Boydell Hulley was born in 1776 and their daughter Betty, born in Frodsham was christened at St Lawrence's on 28th December 1785.

Betty sometimes accompanied her father on his home visits and on one of these to tend James, son of John Pickering, corn dealer of Frodsham Bridge, she met his youngest brother Peter. They were the same age and a friendship developed which turned affectionate. The pair became betrothed. Betty was keen to marry quickly, but Peter wished to get the approval of his brother William, on whom he was financially dependent before embarking on matrimony. William was away on business and unable to give his assent quickly, so Betty, hurt and offended, broke off their engagement and returned his gifts. Betty never married and lived with two spinster cousins in Liverpool. She died there in March 1876 aged 90.

James Hulley died in 1799 after a long illness. An obituary in the Chester Chronicle listed his virtues: *his attachments to his friends were uniform and sincere; to his children he was a tender and affectionate parent; to the poor he was humane and charitable; and of society he was an upright and valuable member.* James's son Thomas Boydell Hulley took over his father's practice adding "man-midwife" to his list of qualifications. He is listed in Pigot's Directory of 1828/9 and 1834. Perhaps he was too generous to the poor as he was declared bankrupt in 1812 and again in 1834. His partnership with the surgeon W. M. Lightfoot of Frodsham was dissolved in 1837 and Thomas moved to Lymm, where he died. He was buried in St Lawrence Frodsham on 20th August 1839.

Thomas had married Elizabeth Nevitt Bennett of Saughall in 1802. They had three sons and a daughter, all christened in Frodsham. Their youngest son, James Ridley Hulley b.1818 was a chemist and druggist. He died at his father's home in Lymm in 1837, aged 20. He too was buried in Frodsham.

Sarah, b.1810, never married and lived with her brother, Robert Churchman Hulley, b 1809, a surgeon in Manchester. Sarah died in Manchester in 1845 and was buried in Frodsham on 28th February 1845.

Robert trained as a doctor in Glasgow and set up his practice in Manchester. He was a well-known free-trade agitator who was declared bankrupt in 1851, blaming his insolvency on railway speculations, bad debts and ill health. In 1855 he was

taken to court by his nephew John, for failure to comply with the wishes of his aunt Sarah as stated in her will. The case was heard in Chancery but the outcome is not known. It is said that Robert died penniless in Australia in 1862.

The eldest son of Thomas and Elizabeth, John Nevitt Hulley, b 1803, trained at St. Thomas's and Guy's Hospital and was admitted to the Honorable Company of Apothecaries in August 1825 and the Royal College of Surgeons in May 1826. He practised in Liverpool where he married Elizabeth Speed in 1831. They had two children, John born in 1833 and Sarah born in 1834. John Nevitt died at his brother's home in Manchester in 1840, leaving his wife with two young children. Elizabeth ran a lodging house in Liverpool where her daughter, Sarah died in 1867 aged 32.

Their son, John, is probably the most well-known. He too died young at the age of 42 of emphysema and bronchitis but is remembered as being the professor of gymnastics and Gymnasiarch (an Athenian officer who superintended the gymnasia) of Liverpool. He was a strong advocate of gymnastics for health and well-being, lecturing on the subject to large audiences. He introduced Olympic Festivals to Liverpool in 1862 which ran for a number of years. In 1866 he was presented with an illuminated testimonial from the people of Llandudno for the work he had done in the town, for the welfare of the inhabitants and the enjoyment of thousands of visitors. He had established "Olympic Games", aquatic sports, water illuminations, torchlight fetes and amusements as well as improving the sea bathing facilities.

John was the originator and promotor of the first public gymnasium in Liverpool in Myrtle Street the foundation stone for which was laid in 1864. In 1869 he introduced the velocipede to Liverpool establishing a Velocipede Club. John was a co-founder, together with Dr William Penny Brooke of Much Wenlock, of the National Olympian Society, set up in 1865 to encourage participation in physical education through Olympian Festivals across Britain. This was the for-runner of the British Olympic Association founded in 1905. (Dr William Penny Brooke staged the first Wenlock Olympic Games in 1850.)

It is ironic that in a family of doctors so many of the family died young. They achieved so much that one wonders what more they could have done had they had better health.

More details of the life of John Hulley can be found on a number of on-line websites.

NORLEY HALL & THE WOODHOUSE FAMILY

Kath Gee

The Editors' note to an article in the Frodsham & District History Society Journal 2016, page 17, outlined the presence of three generations of the Woodhouse family in Norley during the nineteenth century. Those initial findings led to more research and fieldwork which supported a popular walk around the village lanes pointing out the estate buildings of its two manors: Norley Hall and Norley Bank (Frodsham Festival of Walks 2017). The distinguished life of Peter Edgerton Warburton, born at Norley Bank, featured in the Journal last year. In this issue I present a more detailed study of the history of Norley Hall and its occupants, and in particular, the legacy of the Woodhouse family in the village today.

Early history of Norley

At the time of Domesday Norley was part of the Kingsley estate and held from Earl Hugh Lupus. In medieval times Norley's existence was intrinsically bound to that of the Forest of Mara and Mondrem which reached its maximum extent in the thirteenth century and was only finally disafforested (1) in 1812. The heart of the Forest of Mara survives as Delamere Forest today. The first record of a 'Norley Hall' dates from the fifteenth century. It was in the ownership of the Hall family and initially on the site of the nearby property now called 'The Paddock'. Archaeological finds in the garden of 'The Paddock' were reported in the Cheshire Archaeological Bulletin no. 5, 1977 (2). About 1500 a new 'Norley Hall' was built by Thomas Hall on the present site. John Hall enlarged the house in 1697 and in 1782 John's grandson, William Hall (1733-1795), rebuilt the Hall on the same site. On William's death the Norley Hall Estate was inherited by his nephew, George Whitley of Alvanley (1758-1819) – see the article by Sue Lorimer: *The Whitley Window, St John's Church, Alvanley* in this Journal. After George died his son, the Rev William Whitley (1795-1876), sold the estate by public auction at the Red Lion Hotel in Warrington, to Samuel Woodhouse from West Derby, Liverpool. At the time of the sale in 1825 it was described as a valuable freehold estate comprising a *modern mansion, called Norley Hall, with extensive offices, stables, pleasure grounds, plantations and gardens...* There were also 8 dairy farms covering 1011 acres and the estate occupied about $\frac{3}{4}$ of Norley Township (Chester Chronicle 29 April 1825). Samuel was able to purchase the estate because he had earned wealth from the Woodhouse family business.

The Woodhouse Family Business



Samuel Woodhouse (1771-1834) was the second son of John Woodhouse senior (1731-1812), a Liverpool merchant residing at West Derby, Liverpool, who was trading in soda ash (3), the chief export of Sicily at the time. In 1773 he was sailing along the west coast of Sicily to the port of Mazara del Vallo when a storm forced them to take shelter in the small port of Marsala. Whilst in one of Marsala's taverns John was surprised to taste the high quality local wine, *vino perpetuo* (4)

This wine tasted similar to Spanish & Portuguese fortified wines that were very popular in England at the time. John decided to ship 50 'pipes' of *vino perpetuo* back to Liverpool, i.e. 50 'pipes' = 50 barrels each with a capacity of c.100 gallons. He was concerned the wine would lose its fine qualities on the long sea voyage so he fortified it with brandy. This was how Marsala wine was created.

In England the market for Marsala wine grew and vine production needed to increase to meet demand. John's eldest son, **John junior (1770-1826)** went out to Sicily in 1787. The Woodhouses provided loans to farmers to establish more vineyards. They repaired the main street in Marsala & built a mole (breakwater) to improve the harbour. When youngest son, **William (1775-1835)** joined them they bought a fishing shed and converted it into a secure winery or *baglio* (5) on a seven acre site near to the harbour. The site also contained a *charming country house in semi-Palladian style*. There were *gardens, poultry-runs, kennels, vines, plots of wheat and even a cemetery*. The first grave was that of John junior's friend, John Christian, a cooper from the Isle of Man who died in Marsala in 1793. (Raleigh Trevelyan 1972)

The family traded as Messrs. Woodhouse and Brothers. Marsala wine was held in such high repute, and at a time when rum was increasingly difficult to obtain, that in 1800 the British Government gave orders that the Mediterranean Fleet under the Right Honourable Rear Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson K.B., Duke of Bronte in Sicily, should be supplied with it. The agreement with John junior & William Woodhouse for the delivery of 500 'pipes' within the space of five weeks to his Majesty's Ships off Malta, was personally signed by "Bronte Nelson" at Palermo on 19 March 1800 (6). The following day Nelson informed his Commander-in-chief of the deal (7). In the early nineteenth century the Woodhouse family amassed a fortune from the business. Sources tell us they operated the wine production and exporting side of the business and encouraged vine growing to their specification in other parts of Sicily, e.g. on Nelson's Bronte Estate on the slopes of Mount Etna in the east and also in Malta.

John senior, who fortuitously discovered *vino perpetuo*, created Marsala wine and introduced it to England, died in Liverpool in 1812. John junior died of gout, without issue, in Marsala in 1826 and William died in 1835 also in Marsala. Second son Samuel died at Norley Hall in 1834. The eldest sons of William and Samuel respectively, John (1819-1840) and Samuel Woodhouse II (1821-1892) were both minors when their fathers died. John died at Brazenose College, Oxford, after a short illness but was survived by his younger brother, William Henry (1824-1858).

From the 1830s control of the Woodhouse family business was assumed by a relative, Rev. Humphrey Archer Hervey, who never lived in Marsala but appointed managers to take charge of Baglio Woodhouse. Two of his sons, Humphrey Archer junior and Robert, eventually joined the business, also William Henry, William's second son. After Humphrey Archer junior's wife died in 1861 he lost interest in the business and the situation was only saved by Samuel Woodhouse II's second son, **Frederick William (1849-1934)**, *who went out to Marsala for 5 years in 1867 immediately after leaving Eton*. The business prospered again under Frederick's direction and eventually two of his younger brothers joined him. The business lasted until the start of WW1 (Raleigh Trevelyan 1972).

Samuel Woodhouse senior (1771-1834)

Returning to John senior's second son, Samuel, his role seems to have been at the Liverpool end of the family business. Four years after his father's death, Samuel, at the age of 44, married Martha Frances Gordon, aged 20, in Neston, Cheshire. They produced all of their five children before purchasing the Norley Estate in 1825. After moving to Norley Hall, Samuel retained his commitment to the family business in Liverpool whilst investing both time and money in the Norley community. The legacy of his activities is still to be observed in the village. For instance:

- in 1832 Samuel gave land for the building of an Anglican church. This is now demolished but the date stone survives in the grounds of the present church ([photo 1](#))
- in 1833 he founded a Sunday school which became a day school in 1844. It remained the church primary school until 1989 when a new village school opened. The former building is now private accommodation ([photo 2](#))
- in 1833-4 Samuel had extensive outbuildings constructed at Wob Farm, now called 'The Home Farm'. Samuel & Martha's dated monogram still adorns the property ([photo 3](#))
- in 1834 Samuel had Town Farm 2 built or rebuilt and adorned with their dated monogram. This residential property is now called 'The Meadows' ([photo 4](#))

After nine years at Norley, Samuel Woodhouse senior died aged 63. An engraved stone plaque that may have come from the old church has recently been discovered behind the Woodhouse Monument in the graveyard:



ADJOINING
THIS IS THE REMAINS OF
SAMUEL WOODHOUSE ESQ
OF BRONTE NEAR LIVERPOOL
AND NORLEY HALL IN THIS TOWNSHIP
AND
MARTHA HIS BELOVED WIFE
THE FORMER OF WHOM DEPARTED THIS LIFE
ON THE 23RD DAY OF FEBRUARY 1834
IN HIS 63RD YEAR
THE LATTER ON THE 10TH DAY OF MAY 1840
AGED 45 YEARS.

TO A BEREAVED FAMILY THEIR LOSS IS IRRELIEVABLE
AND THE MANY ENDEARING QUALITIES OF EACH
WILL LONG BE REMEMBERED BY ALL WHO KNEW THEM
HE WAS DISTINGUISHED NO LESS BY HIS BENEVOLENT DISPOSITION
THAN HIS UPRIGHT AND HONOURABLE CHARACTER...
TO BOTH THIS CHURCH IS LARGELY INDEBTED
HE CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY TO ITS ERECTION...

The Woodhouse Monument is listed Grade II. Three of its four vertical panels commemorate William d.1835, John, his son aged 22 d.1840 and Mary Hannah Isabel (his infant daughter) b.1833. The fourth panel is blank. The leaning plaque contains the above inscription. KG

Samuel senior's eldest son and third child, **Samuel Woodhouse II**, was only 12 years old when his father died.

Samuel Woodhouse II (1821-1892)

We know little of Samuel's early life until 1844 when, at the age 23, he married Eliza Mostyn from Glasgow. She was aged 19 and the daughter of Henry Thornton Mostyn, an Army Surgeon in Malta from 1825-1848. The marriage took place in St Paul's Cathedral, Valetta, Malta before they returned to Norley for the rest of their lives.

In 1845 the young couple had Norley Hall remodelled in Tudor style by renowned Liverpool architect, Alfred Bower Clayton, ([photos 5&6](#)). Nine years later Samuel commissioned Edward Kemp to redesign the garden. This directly followed Kemp's work at Park Place, now Castle Park, Frodsham.

The 1851 census tells us that Samuel and Eliza had three children under 5 and eight servants.

By 1861 the household included six children, a young niece, butler, cook, nurse and six servants.

Samuel and Eliza produced twelve children between 1846 and 1867: three of them died before reaching the age of 1 but three of them lived to be more than 80 years old.

Samuel's wife, Eliza, died in 1889 aged 64 and Samuel three years later aged 70. Samuel and Eliza, their eldest daughter, Eliza Frances who died aged 19 years, and four of their eight sons are buried in the graveyard at Norley close to the Woodhouse Monument which was erected c.1840. *Did Samuel commission the Monument after his younger brother, William, two of William's offspring and Martha, his mother, died between 1833 and 1840?*

The good deeds of Samuel and Eliza in Norley are numerous. He is especially remembered for:

- Renewing many of the buildings on the estate, in particular, Norley Hall and its gardens. Both are now privately owned although part of the exterior of Kemp's kitchen garden wall is visible from Town Farm Lane.
- Reducing the rent of his tenants by 10% in the bad farming years of 1846 & 1886
- Giving over a site for the vicarage at the time the present church was built in 1878 ([photos 7&8](#))
- Samuel was also a respected Justice of the Peace and member of the Eddisbury Bench, Deputy Lieutenant of Cheshire, Sheriff of Chester in 1869, a River Weaver Trustee, a patron of the Parish Church, a supporter of the local school, and latterly, the Kingsley Home for Boys which was established at Kingsley Hall in 1886.

The report of his passing (Cheshire Observer 25 June 1892) described Samuel as a *most kind and considerate landlord* whose work was done in a *quiet and unostentatious manner*. Samuel's second child and first son, Samuel Henry, inherited Norley Hall on the death of his father.

Col. Samuel Henry 'Harry' Woodhouse III (1848-1932)

Samuel Henry attended Eton College and University College, Oxford, before qualifying as a Barrister at Lincoln's Inn Field, London in 1875. He married Florence Ada Wilkinson in Rathdown, Ireland in 1876 and was engaged in military service from 1881. After his father's death Norley Hall continued to be occupied by members of the Woodhouse family until it was sold. Norley had become a parish in 1836 but it was not until 1894 that provision was made to elect Parish Councils. The poll took place at the school in Norley and eight members were elected including Samuel Henry who became their first Chairman. His resignation when Norley Hall was sold at the end of the century was received with great sadness.

For much of the early twentieth century Samuel and Florence resided at Heatherton Park, Taunton, Somerset until Samuel died, aged 84, in 1932.

Recent history of the Norley Hall Estate

In 1899 the estate was sold to **Charles Bell JP**, a former partner in Messrs Barton and Bell, brewers in Wavertree, Liverpool. Charles was a breeder of shorthorn cattle and shire horses. They won him many prizes at agricultural shows and he exported stock to Argentina and elsewhere. On his death in 1914, his pedigree stock and the furniture contents of Norley Hall were sold. The estate was broken up for sale in forty lots (Cheshire Observer 7 March 1914).

James Dronsfield, an inventor and manufacturing engineer, bought Norley Hall and 35 acres in 1914. When he died after a long illness in 1942 his only daughter, Selina Dronsfield, continued to live there. From 1958 the Hall itself was divided into two residences and its outbuildings sold and converted into individual dwellings. One of the two residences, Norley Hall Farm, listed Grade II, is for sale by Savills: guide price £895,000 (2018).

Conclusion

In this study, I have provided key details of the significant growth and development of both the Woodhouse family business and the Norley Hall Estate. Four generations of Woodhouses played an important role in the management of their family wine business in Marsala and Liverpool and adopted a benevolent role as landed gentry in the lives of Norley villagers during the nineteenth century. In contrast, the twentieth century and especially the onset of WW1, saw the business fold as young members were recalled for war duty. Similarly, the changing socio-economic conditions witnessed the slow demise of the once grand estate. But many of Norley's Woodhouse legacies are still there to be discovered by the astute observer.

Notes that enhance the text

Disafforestation (1) = freedom from Forest Law. The southern part of the Forest of Mara was classed as a hunting forest until 1812 when an Enclosure Act was passed to return the remnant forest to ordinary land. The Act transferred ownership of half the area to the Crown (Delamere Forest) & half to surrounding major landowners. The Forestry Commission, established in 1919, took over the management of Delamere Forest and now works with Cheshire West and Chester to promote recreational use of the forest.

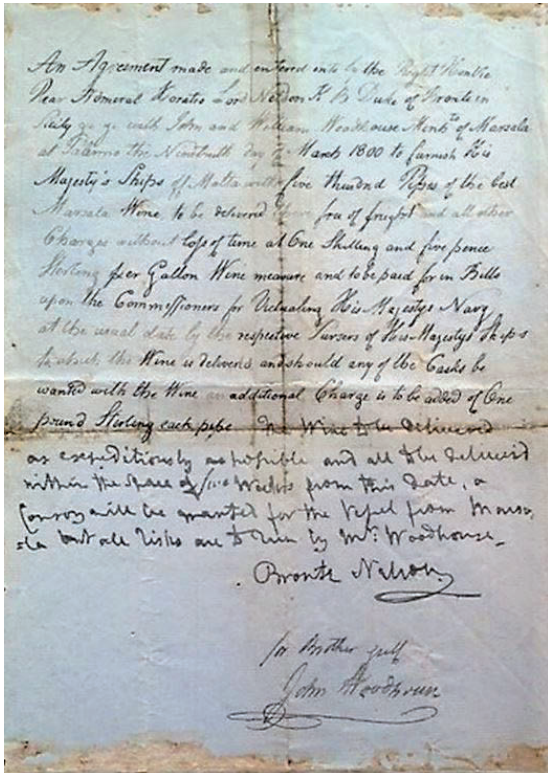
CAB no.5 1977 (2) page 41 – Norley The Paddocks, Town Farm Lane, reports that a party of four from the Northwich Archaeology & Local Studies Group examined sandstone structures exposed by the owners in the garden of the property. The finds were thought to indicate occupation of the site in the 16th – 17th century. A copy of the report may be accessed online via the Cheshire Historic Environment Record.

Soda ash (3) in John Woodhouse senior's time was obtained from the ashes of the succulent plant *Salsola soda*, common name saltwort, which grows in coastal regions throughout the Mediterranean basin. Soda ash is a crucial ingredient in the glass-making & soap-making industries.

Vino perpetuo (4) or *perpetuum* was the wine of Sicilian peasant families made by a special aging technique in large casks for celebratory occasions. *Vino perpetuo* was not fortified but the process of producing it gave it special qualities and an alcohol content of 17%-19% volume. Ancient vine varieties that were well adapted to Sicilian climate & soils produced the grapes.

The vinification process using macerated skins and strong presses produced a 'must' and a wine rich in polyphenols. When wine was drawn off for celebrations an equal quantity of young wine was added to the vintage in the aging cask: a kind of perpetual topping up.

Baglio (5) is a term that was widely used in Sicily for a fortified country estate initially to protect from marauders when producing wheat and then vines. Baglio Woodhouse became the model for later wineries that set up in Marsala, e.g. Baglio Ingham, established by a Yorkshire competitor in 1812 and Baglio Florio, established by an Italian industrialist in 1833. The latter still exists and has modern premises in Marsala producing high quality wine and can be visited. Some traditional baglios in other parts of Sicily have been transformed into contemporary wineries and farmhouse inns that provide tourist accommodation.



The Agreement with Nelson (6) dated 19 March 1800 & signed 'Bronte Nelson' was exhibited at a society meeting by Joseph Mayer FSA, a founder member of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire and contributor to the public museum that is now the World Museum, Liverpool. The exhibit was made possible by kind permission of its possessor, **John George Woodhouse (1823-1889)**, second son of Samuel Woodhouse senior (Liverpool Mercury 6 April 1852). Some 90 years later another local newspaper reported that 'the Agreement' was displayed above a mantelpiece in a Liverpool hotel smokers' room (Liverpool Daily Post 15 July 1943). Then in 1948 'the Agreement' was given to the Stewartry Museum in Kirkcudbright by Col. George Hamilton of London, where it still resides! (Enquiry by Sue Lorimer and subsequent email correspondence).

Grateful thanks to the Stewartry Museum for permission to show document No.4069

Nelson's letter (7) to his Commander-in-chief dated 20 March 1800 says *I have agreed with Mr Woodhouse, at Marsala, for 500 pipes of wine, to be delivered to our Ships at Malta, at 1s 5d per gallon; and as Mr Woodhouse runs all the risks, pays all the freight etc, I don't think it is a bad bargain. The wine is so good that any gentleman's table might receive it, and it will be of real use to our seamen.* Nelson suggested to John that his preferred brand of Marsala should be known as 'Bronte Madeira'.

Sources








Gladys Archer 2012 Norley a village alive
 Tom Wright & RM Bevan 2009 Past times – Kingsley, Acton Bridge, Crowton & Norley
 Raleigh Trevelyan 1972 Princes under the Volcano
 Henry Jeffreys in History Today Feb. 2017 *Bittersweet Taste of British Sicily*
 Wikipedia, Ancestry and other internet sites, e.g. *Baglio Woodhouse Marsala* on Youtube

A time line / family tree for Woodhouse family members mentioned in the text

	John Woodhouse senior (1731-1812) Traded in Sicily & created Marsala wine		
John junior (1770-1826) Died in Marsala Established Baglio Woodhouse	Samuel senior (1771-1834) Bought Norley Hall in 1825 & improved estate farms & village facilities		William (1775-1835) Died in Marsala Worked with John junior
Baglio Woodhouse managed by a relative, Rev Humphrey Archer Hervey from c.1835 until his death in 1843			
	Samuel II (1821-1892) Developed Norley Hall & gardens, also estate farms & village facilities	John George (1823-1889) Possessor of the Agreement with Nelson	William Henry (1824-1858) In partnership Humphrey Hervey junior
	Baglio Woodhouse managed by Humphrey Hervey junior until Humphrey's demise in the 1860s		
	Samuel III 1848-1932 First Chairman of Norley Parish Council Sold Norley Hall in 1899	Frederick 1849-1934 Rescued & turned around the Woodhouse business in Marsala which survived until 1914	



The bust of John Woodhouse junior who signed the Agreement with Nelson on 19th March 1800 (From the website of the winery and tourist attraction Baglio Florio)

	
<p>1 Date stone of the first Anglican church was placed in the ground of the present church in 2002</p>	<p>2 Residential accommodation in the former Sunday School & Church Primary School founded by Samuel Woodhouse senior in 1833</p>
	
<p>3 Outbuildings of The Home Farm, formerly Wob Farm, supporting Samuel & Martha's dated monogram, top right</p>	<p>4 The Meadows, formerly Town Farm 2, supporting Samuel & Martha's dated monogram, bottom left</p>
	
<p>5 Norley Hall rebuilt in 1782 by William Hall. Remodelled in Tudor Revival style 1845 for Samuel Woodhouse II</p>	<p>6 Norley Hall in its Parkland setting as seen from Norley Road, to the south southwest,</p>
	
<p>7 Church of St John Evangelist, listed Grade II* 1878-79 by J L Pearson. Samuel Woodhouse II was a patron of the Parish Church</p>	<p>8 Vicarage, built on the site of the Red Lion Inn, donated by Samuel Woodhouse II, next to the Church on Norley Road</p>

Photographs of Norley's Woodhouse legacies – KG

THE WHITLEY WINDOW, ST JOHN'S CHURCH, ALVANLEY

Sue Lorimer

George Whitley, who is commemorated in this window, was the son of George and Mary Whitley. He was christened at the Parish Church of St Laurence on the 11th June 1758. The Whitleys were a long standing farming family from Alvanley whose routes can be traced as far back as the early 17th century.

George's mother, Mary, was the sister of William Hall, Clerk of the Peace for Chester, who had inherited Norley Hall and its Estate from his father in 1769. When William died childless in 1795, George, also an attorney in Chester, succeeded him in the post of Clerk of the Peace and more importantly inherited the Norley Hall Estate.

Anne Whitley, George's wife, was the youngest daughter of Fletcher Orred, son of George Orred, Lord of the Manor of Tranmere, Wirral. They married in Frodsham on the 1st May 1792. Anne's father, Fletcher, died young, leaving his three children in the guardianship of his brother John, Lord of the Manor of Weston, and their mother Elizabeth, who is also commemorated in this window. A descendant of Fletcher's son George, being the last male heir, inherited the family estates in Tranmere, Bebington, Weston and Runcorn.

George and Mary Whitley had two other children: Anne, who is also remembered in the window, and John who was the gentleman gamekeeper to John Ardern of Alvanley and whose descendants were the "Whitleys" of Greenall Whitley fame.

George and Anne Whitley had ten children including the Revd. William Whitley, the eldest son, who was curate of Alvanley 1820-1825 and vicar of Whitegate 1825-1872. George was an attorney in Liverpool and Anne married the son of the Archdeacon of Chester. Ellen married Revd. Meyrick Lally and emigrated to Canada. Three of her brothers also emigrated: John, Daniel and Fletcher. Fletcher became Receiver General in the Bahamas. Elizabeth, the eldest daughter, remained unmarried and is buried at Alvanley with her brothers William and Daniel.

George lived in Pepper Street, Chester when he was an attorney and only moved to Norley in 1813 where he died in 1819. However he considered Alvanley his home and was buried here on 12th June 1819.



WHITLEY WINDOW INSCRIPTION

The Y- tracery stained glass window on the east side of the south door of St John's Church, Alvanley bears the following inscription:

In an adjoining vault are deposited the remains of George Whitley who died 8th June 1819 aged 61; Anne Whitley who died 13th May 1858 aged 86; Elizabeth Orred, mother of Anne Whitley, died 30th Jan 1814 aged 71; Anne Whitley, sister of George Whitley, died 4th June 1834 aged 74. The children of the above named George Whitley and Anne his wife, have raised this monument to the memory of their beloved parents as a token of their affection and gratitude.

JOHN MILLER 1912-2018

We sadly lost our oldest History Society member on 1st June. John enjoyed attending our speaker meetings until early this year. He was always alert, often asked a question or offered information to the speaker and joined us for refreshments afterwards. At his funeral in St Laurence's his niece, Di Mather, painted a heart-warming picture of his long life. Here is an edited version of her Eulogy.



Dearest Uncle John

One hundred and five and a half years – an incredible life span! In 10 minutes or so, it is impossible to mention everything that made up those 105 years! But let's start at the beginning.

John Charles Miller was born in Frodsham on November 26th 1912, the younger son of Rudolph and Alice. Actually, at birth his name was John Charles Weissmuller, as his father's family was Swiss. During the First World War the family changed its name to Miller because anything that sounded at all German was viewed with great suspicion. Although it was officially changed in 1919, apparently, it wasn't until the year 2000 that his name change was finally made legal!

When the Great War broke out he was only 2 years old, but he remembered standing watching the parade of volunteers with his brother, Rudolph, who was 8 at the time. During that war they moved to Fleetwood as their father was running one of the wartime munitions factories and he had happy memories of growing up there.

They moved back to Frodsham and lived at the house called Ty Gwyn in Main Street, now The Old Hall Hotel. I often used to take Uncle John out for tea there and he would regale guests with stories of how he and my father never walked down the stairs – they always slid down the banisters!

After leaving boarding school he got a job in a chemical factory in Widnes where my father was working. During the evenings he often helped the projectionist at the cinema in Frodsham and sometimes took over if he was ill or on holiday. John loved being able to see all the films and retained an interest in film and television all his life.

In March 1938 he married Marjory Spencer and they had 3 children: Duncan, Charlotte and Rudolph. Sadly, Duncan and Charlotte are no longer with us but John is survived by Rudy, 7 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren, most of them here today.

John and Marjory lived at Sandfields when they got married, where their three children were born. When the Second World War broke out John joined the Fire Service which he loved. Although he was based in Frodsham and Runcorn, on nights when Liverpool was under heavy bombardment the Brigade was drafted in to help. It was there he sustained his only injury. A bomb went off very nearby and the blast threw him against a wall damaging his back. He was extremely lucky though, as his back injury didn't really come back to haunt him until he was in his 90s.

During the war he was sent to Bournemouth. He was a very experienced (and very fast!) driver and they needed someone of his calibre. He really enjoyed his time there but family commitments meant he had to decline their offer of a fulltime post. When he eventually retired from the local Fire Service he became a school caretaker until full retirement at the age of 65. He used to say how much pleasure it gave him to meet with the school students when they had grown up, especially when they proudly introduced their children to him!

It was at about this time that Marjory became ill and was diagnosed with MS. She fought the illness very bravely but became totally bedridden in 1968. Rudy was in the Merchant Navy at the time and Marjory used to enjoy getting tape recordings from his travels all over the globe, which she much preferred to just receiving letters. John looked after her and often said that he would have liked to have been a Nurse if he hadn't gone into the Fire Service. John nursed Marjory tirelessly at home until her death in December 1973.

Sometime after Marjory's death John met Freda Hepworth again. They had known each other in their teens but were now both on their own and a lasting friendship soon blossomed. John and Freda spent many happy years in her house in Bradley Lane. They enjoyed a good social life and travelled all over England and North Wales, Llandudno being a great favourite. They also frequently went to Thornbury to stay with Freda's goddaughter, Barbie. Barbie soon adopted John as her Honorary Godfather and he has been very much part of her life ever since. (Barbie's husband Nigel played the organ at John's funeral.)

John loved going to Harlech and then Porthmadog when his son Rudy and Janie moved to North Wales. He always said Janie fed him so well, that what with the delicious meals and the sea air, he never slept better anywhere in his life!

So, what were John's interests and hobbies? John loved classical music and especially enjoyed concerts in this beautiful church. He played badminton (which he gave up at the age of 75) snooker, which he played well into his 90s, gardening, decorating and baking delicious cakes. In fact, generally doing any job that needed doing in the house or garden – a very handy man to have around! He used to come and decorate for us too. Up until last year he would always try and fix things himself before asking for help – even if it did mean things ended up in bits, or not quite put back together in the right order. He joined the Frodsham History Society, attended local music concerts and latterly, the highlights of his week were The Opal Club in the Methodist Church every Tuesday and the delicious Sunday lunch at the Ring 'O Bells.

His independence and his curiosity about life were two of the things that kept him young. He and his brother were similar in that way. They had a Canadian cousin called Godfrey, who used to stay with my father every summer. Godfrey was highly amused by the two brothers always wanting to see how things were made and how they worked. Rudolph always had a ruler in his pocket and Godfrey used to say: *show them something and they'll measure it!*

John had wonderful friends who were very good to him and visited regularly, taking him out for meals or shopping. John never sat at home waiting for people to come and see him, even when he could no longer drive (he had to stop at the age of 99 after a heart problem) he used to get on his mobility scooter and go to see them. He lived independently until the last few months of his life, when after a couple of spells in hospital, he moved to Hillcrest – thoroughly enjoying all the attention he got from the wonderful staff!

John was so proud of his family and especially loved getting cards and visits from the great grandchildren. He has been a brilliant example and role model of how to make the best of life and get on with things without complaining. He will be sadly missed by us all.

FINAL ARCHIVE REPORT 14th MAY 2018

Kath Hewitt

So, what does one say after 24 years as archivist to Frodsham and District History Society; and how does one say it?

As in all previous years, the archive service has been very busy indeed and most enjoyable, most people know that I relish delving! However, this time I do not intend to record the enquiries but to recall how the society's growing archives moved from pillar to post.

In 1994, Sue Davy and I, as new committee members, were asked to update the existing archive material collected by the late Bill Hawkin and his committee and kept in members' homes until moved into the cellars of Castle Park House. Eventually, a few of us manhandled the acquisitions from the damp cellars to the Mayor's Parlour, part of the now demolished Town Council rooms attached to the House. The Parlour had been a well appointed room for greeting civic guests but by 1994 the vandalised window was boarded, and we shared half of the small dark room with the Arts Centre, having to lock the door whilst working there to prevent weird strangers entering.

For over twelve months, working on hands and knees (the floor being the only work space) we recorded everything, first in longhand and then on to my computer. Practicable decisions were agreed and archive lists were made available to the members. From the original list of 8 A4 pages, the contents of the archives grew steadily and were regularly updated. Padgate College students and individual researchers made good use of the archives for their own projects - a very positive and quiet start before the deluge of donations began.

Sue retired in 2002 because of ill health but offered to help whenever necessary. Over 2003-04, we searched for short term storage and new premises as Castle Park House was to be temporarily closed and the Mayor's Parlour demolished. The room's electricity was turned off twelve months early and a torch was my only means of light. The Frodsham Forward Team found space in a room near to Devonshire Bakery, so with the aid of a small greenhouse lamp, Sue and I packed everything into boxes ready for the white van man who had to make two trips before the contents were stacked in the back room of the offered shop space.

Almost two years later we moved, yet again, into the tiny room at the top of the restored Castle Park House and the rest is history. Vale Royal staff and Frodsham Forward were more than helpful providing a desk, 3 chairs, a lamp, fitting out the book cupboard and providing space in a basement room. As the tenant, I was also given a fob key which allowed access to the whole building - a daunting responsibility.

The first committee's aims in 1981 were to promote interest, knowledge and enjoyment, and these aims I followed providing access to public research, study, enquiries, exhibitions, articles, reports and contemporary press news items. Over the remaining years, donations adding knowledge about Frodsham families and events have flooded in by person, by post, in suitcases, baskets, carrier bags, boxes and car boots! Several times I have had to climb over full boxes to reach my desk. The late Dr Philip Dodd's prolific papers had previously taken a small group of us almost two years to document before I was able to file everything

away. The late Jim Harvey's boxes, with Joe Barker's wonderful paintings took me a year to document. Arthur Smith's collection from the very first meetings kept coming and coming, and in 2009 the closing Frodsham High School's history boards, cups, shields and boxes of papers filled the room - and the corridor - such excitement and discovery!

So, history has been gathered from, about and for Frodsham folk. Fascinating enquiries answered from around England, Scotland, Wales, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Norway all re-connecting families across many generations. The Australian emails have been of especial interest as several enquiries were concerned with finding siblings after children had been shipped out there. In addition to my research, Claire Hayes was able to further their very emotional enquiries.

It is reassuring to donors to know that their family papers and artefacts are safe and freely available in the Archives, so careful decisions have had to be made. For example, if there is a request for a donated item to be returned, a dogmatic 'no' is unrealistic if family circumstances have changed and so I have returned a small cannon (yes!) a cricket bat and ball and three formal photographs of past mayors - all with the agreement of the committee. Other requests have been made for family papers to be in our 'Safe Keeping' and I have documented them as such. Frodsham Town Council has deposited very interesting civic documents in this way. It has been said by a number of people that the History Society's collection is steadily growing into Frodsham's Town Archives.

How times have changed. In 1994 few homes had computers, so the internet, Google, websites and smart phones later transformed the way I worked. The archive lists have been on the internet for some years but the design and breadth of the new Interactive Archive Website, with its burgeoning Time Line and Buildings Map, has taken the society into the future. Steve McEntee, one of the very early committee members, offered to design the website, free of charge, recording all the items that I had documented over the years and producing something new and attractive for the society and the public. It is easy to manage and find your way around but it gave me many sleepless nights trying to make sure everything was transferred to Steve.

Space in the tiny room is now at a premium, but to find another with the original Vale Royal considerations will be challenging. Twice over the years I was invited to official meetings where opening a museum was on the agenda. Nothing came of either meeting when research showed the financial costs were exorbitant – but there is always hope. Maybe, the empty first floor of the old Frodsham High School above the library, will be opened up one day to house the archives – just a thought!

So, these 24 years for me, have been interesting, exciting, stimulating, time consuming, often stressful, but never dull and very active! I have listened, learned, and shared so much history about Frodsham. Much has happened with so many surprises, for example, the 29 letters of 3 love-lorn young Frodsham people between 1907 and 1910; the amusing red herring of the Frodsham Cup; the c1830 Flower Cottage Coat discovery; Jamie Bruce Lockhart's (descendent of the Weaver and Abbott Wright families) fascinating correspondence about his famous left wing aunt, Harriet Shaw Weaver and the suffragette movement; so much sombre information concerning The Great War 1914-1918 and the

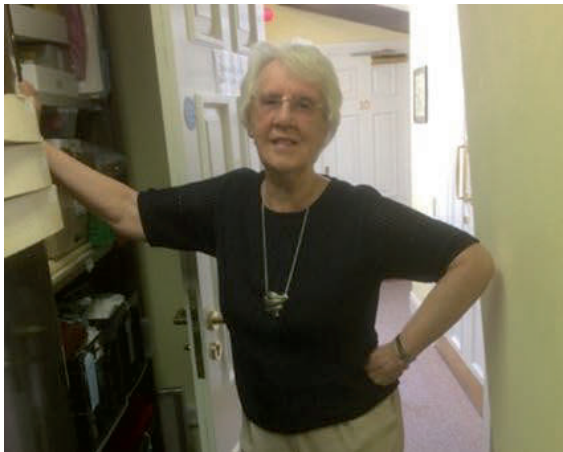
Second World War 1939-1945. All recorded in the public Pink Hardback Files in Frodsham Library, Castle Park House Reception and on the website frodhistoryarchives.co.uk. The archive room is overflowing with the history of Frodsham's people and events from the 1300s.

However, these years have been dependent on the practical help Richard has given throughout. He has "voluntarily" made things, repaired, printed, copied, photographed, scanned and digitised 1,600+ slides of Frodsham, listened, encouraged, carried heavy loads to and from exhibitions and ferried me around to find places for enquiries, so he is more than happy that I am giving up! I find it difficult to make him understand just how much I have appreciated everything he has done for me – and for Frodsham & District History Society!

To my friends whose expertise and knowledge of Frodsham has been so important over these many years – Mrs Dorothy Smith, Nick Smith, Simon Longden, Arthur Smith, Sue Davy, Joan Douglas, Alex Cowan, and more recently Steve McEntee, Heather Powling and Sue Lorimer. I give them, and the ladies of Castle Park House, the Town Council, Castle Park Arts Centre and those I have not mentioned, my very grateful thanks for years of supporting and promoting the archives. My very best wishes to the new archivist, Gill Baxter, who has been quickly learning the ropes – much enjoyment Gill!

I hope there is something of value to show for my 24 years but my adventure has ended. Dylan Thomas's, *Do not go gentle into that good night...* springs to mind!

My Regards to Everyone,
Kath Hewitt. (Archivist Retired)



Kath Hewitt, Honorary Member of Frodsham & District History Society (Archivist for 24 years) and the Archive Room in Castle Park House



OUT AND ABOUT IN THE COMMUNITY 2018

Kath Gee, Sue Lorimer & Heather Powling

a) Kemp commemorative tree and FFoW tree walk



The landscape designer, Edward Kemp was born on 25th September 1817. We marked his bicentenary by planting of a commemorative tree in Castle Park on 28th November 2017. Edward Kemp's design for Park Place, now Castle Park, was commissioned by owner Joseph Stubs who had begun to plant trees that were newly discovered and/or recently introduced into Britain. Castle Park has continued to add exotic tree species as opportunities have arisen; on this occasion we planted a Korean Fir *Abies koreana*. Kath led a walk around some of Castle Park's interesting and exotic trees during the Frodsham Festival of Walks 2018.

Cllr Lynn Riley planting the commemorative Korean Fir, watched by Kath Gee and Tom Blundell, the volunteer tree warden.

b) FTC Grant and Shop Poster Exhibitions in CPAC and CP Conservatory

With the aid of a grant from Frodsham Town council our History Society's Shop Posters, originally displayed in property windows during Heritage Open Days in September 2017, were reprinted and laminated for exhibiting in Castle Park Arts Centre from 16th May to 24th June. The exhibition of 18 posters, entitled ***Frodsham Shops Through Time*** included a brief overview of Frodsham's history since early Victorian times. The exhibition showed how individual properties reflected change in peoples' livelihoods and fluctuating economic prosperity following the arrival of the railway in 1850. The posters were also displayed in the windows of the Conservatory in Castle Park during the Festival in the Park and Heritage Open Days this year. They are now stored in the Archive room and may be borrowed by emailing Gill Baxter, Archivist at fdhsarchive@gmail.com, or by contacting Reception at Castle Park House.



History Society's Exhibition in Castle Park Arts Centre:

'Frodsham Shops Through Time' included this image of High Street in the 1880s

c) **Frodsham Bridge research 19-28 April**

On 19 April Kath Gee was contacted by Kat Mace, a researcher for Wall to Wall productions, the company that makes 'Who do you think you are'. Kat was asking for information on the bone and chemical works around Frodsham Port for a programme about an unnamed celebrity who had ancestors living in the area and working in these industries. Members of our Society rallied round, extracting information from old maps and photographs in online collections, books and documents in our Archives, and visited the area to take photographs of building survival, re-use and recent development that characterise the Frodsham Bridge area today. Imagine our disappointment when the company decided to pull the plug on filming the Frodsham element of this programme! But, on the bright side, we now have a much better understanding of life at Frodsham Bridge in the nineteenth & early twentieth centuries.

d) **Heritage Open Days 2018**

This year marks the centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1918 which gave the vote to women over the age of 30 with property worth an annual rateable value of £5.00. For the occasion, the national programme of Heritage Open Days adopted the theme of 'Extraordinary Women'. Here in Frodsham we celebrated the lives of two extraordinary local women from very different periods in our town's history. The History Society sponsored an afternoon of talks at St Laurence Church which was very well attended and well-received. Heather gave a short talk on The anchoress of Frodsham, a medieval religious recluse who lived in a cell attached to St Laurence Church from 1240 to 1280. Professor Emma Rees, Professor of Gender Studies at the University of Chester, spoke of the suffragette centenary: 'Hard Sell to Hard Cell'. Emma's lecture included reference to local suffragist Harriet Shaw Weaver.



Harriet, the granddaughter of Edward Abbott Wright, was born in Frodsham in 1876. Her family moved from East Bank (now Fraser House) in Bridge Lane to Hampstead in 1892 after the death of Edward Abbott Wright. Harriet later used her considerable inherited fortune to rescue the suffragette magazine 'The New Woman' and to publish the work of James Joyce. She became a central figure in avant-garde literature as well as a political activist, eventually joining the Communist Party just before WWII. She died in 1961.

Harriet as an older lady (From FDN1860 Cheshire Image Bank)

Booklets on both our 'extraordinary women' are available for £2.00 each if you missed the occasion and would like to know more.

As usual, the Heritage Open Days programme drew visitors not only to the church, but also to 5 other buildings in Frodsham which were open for the periods 6-9 and 13-16 September 2018.

e) Commemoration of the centenary of the Armistice, 11 November 2018



The World War I Group, which includes members of History Society, mounted its last exhibition at Castle Park Arts Centre between 17 September and 1 November. The exhibition included the wonderful poppy cascade made to mark the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, pictures of the various commemorative occasions held between 2014 and 2018 and information about some of the soldiers who died in the course of the war. This year's Remembrance Day events will commemorate the centenary of the Armistice on 11 November 1918.

Remembrance Day is to be marked by services in St Laurence Church and at the War Memorial on Overton Hill. The World War I Group has commissioned an information board to be placed near the War Memorial which will list the 42 young men who were born in Frodsham and were casualties of the Great War, but whose names do not appear on any of our local memorials. Many of them are named on memorials elsewhere, but the Group thought it would be fitting to name them in Frodsham, not least because many had relatives and friends who lived in Frodsham at the time of the peace in 1918. Other activities over the weekend of 10-11 November include a concert by Frodsham and District Choral Society, a performance in St Laurence Church by Frodsham Players, a pealing of the Church bells and the lighting of a beacon on Overton Hill at 7pm on Remembrance Sunday. The work of the Group will be drawing to an end in July 2019 when the Peace Celebrations held in Frodsham in July 1919 will be remembered.

CHESTER CHRONICLE 16 NOVEMBER 1918

THE GREAT NEWS - On Monday in Main St and Church St, there was a rush round to the builders for flag poles. The school children, being on holiday, gathered round the various scenes of operations, and still there was nothing definite known. The flag race was won by Mr J G Kydd in Church St and Mr Tom Booth in Main St, but only by narrow margins. It was the scream of the sirens and hooters at the various works that decided the people, just on eleven o'clock, and then the flags and bunting fairly flew up and folks appeared as if by magic, and at noon all the people trooped home. Business premises closed down and everybody took a holiday. There was plenty of excitement, and yet people restrained themselves. There was no mafficking (Def: to rejoice with hysterical boisterousness). Disappointment was expressed at the failure of the local subscription band to turn out. Illness and other causes had reduced the available members to three or four. A thanksgiving service was held at the front of the Town Hall in the evening, when addresses were given by Rev. M W Myers, vicar, and the Rev S B Buglass, and at the conclusion the National Anthem was sung. The church bells rang merrily for some hours. On Tuesday many workpeople took another holiday, and again at noon the work people employed at Helsby came home, and during the afternoon the Main St was kept alive with the younger people, who had obtained a supply of fireworks. The lamps are being unscreened, and the clock at the Castle Park is once more chiming out the hours after the long silence.

FRODSHAM & DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY

Programme of Meetings 2019

All indoor meetings are held on Monday evenings at Main Street Community Church,
Frodsham, and start at 7.45pm
Membership £5.00 p.a. + £1.50 per meeting. Visitors £3.00

7 th January	River Weaver through the Ages Colin Edmondson
4 th February	WWI Battle of the Somme Judith Beastall
4 th March	Period Cookery – Liquid Pleasures – History of Coffee, Chocolate and Tea Lena Shiell
1 st April	Adventures of a Victorian Millionaire – a Fully Costumed Tale of Liverpool Millionaire Henry Yates Thompson 'Richie the Ranger' – Richard Baker
13 th May	Historic Churches of Cheshire Tony Bostock
3 rd or 10 th June	Guided Tour of St Georges Hall, Liverpool, Followed by Refreshments Organised by Kath Gee
2 nd September	Ghosts of Chester Tom Jones
7 th October	Mining Experiences Gary Conley
4 th November	WW2 Explosives Store at Dunham Hill Phil Pritchard
9 th December	The Cheshire Hoards Vanessa Oakden

Frank Whitfield, Programme Secretary, has arranged the meetings for 2019
