

THE JOURNAL OF THE  
WILKINSON SOCIETY.

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Editor :

N.J. Clarke

## THE WILKINSON SOCIETY

The Society was formed in 1972 to meet the need for an organisation to preserve the material and documentary evidence of Broseley's industrial past. Since an important part in this industrial past was played by John Wilkinson, who lived for a time at the Lawns, it was decided that the organisation should be known as the Wilkinson Society.

The aims of the Society are :

- (i) to act as custodian of any relevant material and information and to make such material and information available to interested individuals and organisations;
- (ii) to promote any relevant preservation activity and to assist individuals or organisations in such activity where deemed appropriate;
- (iii) to provide a link with the community of Broseley for individuals or organisations undertaking local historical research.

Any available material will be added to the existing collection of Broseley and Wilkinson relics at the Lawns Broseley. This collection is open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays (2-4p.m.) and by appointment.

Administration of the Society is by an annually elected committee. Membership is open to anyone interested in the Society's aims and activities. These activities include illustrated lectures, social evenings, researching and exhibiting the Collection, field-trips and coach-tours. Members are kept informed by a Newsletter, and an annual Journal presents articles on the history of the Broseley area, John Wilkinson and industrial archaeology in general.

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### NOTES AND NEWS

#### The Year's Activities

At the first A.G.M. of the Society on October 4th, 1973, the serving committee was re-elected, with Maurice Hawes as secretary. Following the formal business of the meeting, Mr. Malcolm Wanklyn gave a talk on "Industry in East Shropshire in the century before Lopham Darby".

On January 24th, 1974, a symposium was arranged on the theme of "Local Clay Industries": the speakers were Mr. Frank Turner (Clay Mining at Blists Hill), Mr. Howard Williams (Brick and Tile Works of the Broseley area) and Mr. Tony Herbert (Ceramic Tile Industry of Jackfield).

Mr. George Stretton gave a talk on "Early Communications and Settlements in S.E. Shropshire" on March 22nd.

On May 4th a coach-tour was made of historical sites in the Broseley, Bridgnorth and north Telford areas.

A day conference on June 8th examined the theme "John Wilkinson and the two Willey Ironworks": the speakers were Mr. Robert Machin (Documentary and Archaeological Evidence), Mr. Maurice Hawes (Willey Tramway), Mr. Wayne Turner (John Wilkinson's Trade Tokens) and Mr. Ralph Pee (First Iron Boat); following these talks at the Lawns, lunch was taken at Broseley Hall, and the afternoon field-excursion ended with tea at the Deanery.

In addition to these general meetings, there have been seven committee meetings during the year; a demonstration of a working forge for the Broseley Carnival on August 26th; and the publication of Monograph No. 1 - "John Wilkinson and the two Willey Ironworks", by Ralph Pee and Maurice Hawes.

#### Programme of Events for 1974-75

- October 4th: second A.G.M. followed by talk "The importance of the excavations at Caughley" by Mr. David Holgate.
- November 1st: talk - "Tobacco pipe making in Broseley", by Mr. Ron James (joint meeting with Friends of Ironbridge Gorge Museum).
- January 18th: members' evening (details to be announced)
- February 28th: talk - "John and William Wilkinson in France, the Austrian Netherlands, Scandinavia and Silesia, 1775-1790", by Dr. W.H. Chaloner.
- March 28th: talk - "Brick and Tile Works of the Broseley area" by Mr. Howard Williams (sequel to earlier talk).
- Spring/Summer: coach-trip (to be arranged)

#### The Journal

The first Journal was well received and, as a result of interest from outside the Society, a reprint was necessary. After this initial success, we feel justified in producing a larger Journal this year: this accords with an increase in membership and a wider range of activities. Unfortunately, more Journal means more cost, and we are obliged to increase the price to non-members from 10p. to 15p. Copies of this issue of the Journal and back-numbers can be obtained from the Secretary, Maurice Hawes, 2 Church Street, Broseley, Salop. (20p., including postage).

Contributions to future issues of the Journal would be welcome, and should be sent to the Editor, N.J. Clarke, Cranleigh, Little Wenlock, Telford, Salop (Tel: Malinslee 4135).

## CHURCHES OF THE BROSELEY AREA

Wilkinson, unlike Telford, did not design any churches. His Broseley days were, however, spent in a locality of interesting ones, four of the six of which are still standing and are likely to be standing for a few centuries to come!

All Saints, Broseley, was not around in Wilkinson's day. The parish church of his day (on the same site) was an undistinguished one of brick and stone of 18th century date. At least one and probably two earlier structures stood on the same site, but their architectural qualities are shrouded in mystery. The church of Wilkinson's day was not even called "All Saints". This name was given to the present church and was a typical British compromise following much dispute by the partisans of various individual saints.

The brick and tile industry in 1845 (when Broseley church was built) was in the ascendant and a powerful lobby was in favour of building the church in brick. I am not usually on the side of conformity, but here is one instance when I am pleased that the forces of "reaction" won and the building was thereby built of stone.

Early Victorian churches are not notable for their beauty (the Rev. J.C. Oakes will start sharpening his ecclesiastical sword at these words, but once more I am on the safe side of conformity!) but All Saints is a very notable exception. Its total cost (around £9000) was a large sum even for a church, in those days. And here, by the way, John Randall, in giving the figure as £3,388. 4. 0. is in serious error. The result of this expenditure was a noble Gothic building, which would have been nobler still if modern methods of underpinning foundations had been known then, for the chancel was shortened, owing to unstable ground. This unavoidable act seriously modified the architectural quality of the building as did another - not unavoidable - act, the insertion of side galleries, which partially ruined the majestic effect of the great Gothic arches. The late Prebendary C.S. Jackson saw this and hoped to get rid of the galleries. He failed: the present rector, the Rev. J. Tilston, hopes to do the same and all power to his elbow!

Features of this unusually beautiful Victorian church should be mentioned here. In an age of appallingly ugly stained glass windows the great East window stands out as a triumph to the architect, Mr. Harvey Eginton, and the west window (an unusual feature), though less spectacular, is pleasing. A stained glass window in the north wall, put in by the Thursfield family in 1852, is rather less admirable.

Beneath the fine carpets of the chancel and sanctuary are exquisite "figured" tiles, representing some of the highest skill of the local encaustic tile industry. This type of tile has not been made for many years. It is doubtful if they could be made, even if they were economically viable. The last craftsman locally of this beautiful work was the late Mr. Tom Harrington of Benthall, who has been dead many years.

The pinnacles of the tower were taken down about 25 years ago, as they were in danger of falling on the worshippers! A shame, this, as they did much to set off this fire building. There is a peal of eight bells in the tower (originally 6), but

a small bell, known as "the parson's bell" when I was a choirboy rather a long time ago, predates the other bells by a couple of centuries. It bears date 1642 and possesses the foundry mark of Thomas Clibury, whose foundry was near the present Charlton Arms, Wellington.

Another object of antique interest is a strange, half-circular stone in the clock chamber, with heraldic signs and the letters "R.T." marked on it. It was taken from the old church and probably from previous structures. So far no antiquary has provided a satisfactory explanation for it.

Almost all the church silver predates the church. Two chalices and two patens, beautifully made, bear date 1691. An alms dish, the size of a dinner plate, is dated 1764 and was made in that year from a chalice given to the church in 1658 by Mrs. Gertrude Langley of The Amies, an ancient manor house which once stood a little off the Coalport Road. Two flagons 18" high are early 19th century. The value of this beautiful silver today must be immense. It is perhaps a sign of changed times that before the War some of the oldest of this silver (then in regular use) was kept in a simple wall-safe in the vestry, the key being in one of the drawers of the chest where the priest kept his hood, scarf and other academic and ecclesiastical garments; and no-one would have dreamed for a moment that the silver could be un-safe!

The old Red Church, Jackfield's previous parish church, was demolished some years ago. The arrogance of the Middle Ages continued in these parts for a long time afterwards: this church was built on the tip of an eminence nearer Broseley than Jackfield and the unfortunate parishioners had nearly a mile's walk up a sharp hill to reach it. It was built about 1755 by the Blyth family, in red brick in characteristic mid-18th century style. After little more than a century, undermining made the place of doubtful safety and an annual service only was held there right down to the '20s of this century. The present Jackfield parish church (St Mary's) was built in the village in 1863 and is quite an attractive brick building with an apse. It is a Blomfield church and he makes effective use of red, yellow and blue bricks and stone dressings.

The district's other churches are all much older. The piece de resistance is undoubtedly Barrow, a small church with massive walls on the wind-swept Barrow ridge, a mile and a half from Broseley on the Wenlock road. The main building is early Norman, but the chancel arch is Saxon, the only one in Shropshire. The Rev. L.J. Peltor, the last incumbent of Willey & Barrow, a most worthy historian, states in an excellent pamphlet which he published on Willey and Barrow, that the present chancel of Barrow church was the site of a small chapel built in the 8th century and some of the present fabric would appear to date back to that remote age. This early chapel was dedicated to St. Giles, as is the present church, so that there has been a St. Giles, Barrow, for 1200 years!

The tower, a squat, massive affair characteristic of the Welsh Marches, was added about 1100 and the west door in the tower possesses an early tympanum. Plate includes a chalice of 1625 and a paten of 1700.

St. John the Baptist, Willey, now closed, is near Willey Hall, about a mile and a half away. It is basically Norman, the tower having been rebuilt in the 18th century. Unfortunately the church has suffered sorely from 19th century "restorers", who really went to town on what must have been a very pleasant structure. Beside an oval font of more recent date is an old, plain early Norman one. Two of the five bells bear date 1618 and one 1726.

Two miles south of Broseley, tucked away in a little copse a few hundred yards from the Broseley/Bridgnorth road is the lovely little Norman church of St. Leonard, Linley, one of the neatest specimens of this period in the county, in spite of the inevitable 19th century "restoration" (Mr. Oakes, your favourite period has a lot to answer for!). Two outstanding features are the font and a fantastic tympanum over the south door (long since blocked up). The font is elaborately carved in the late Norman style with cable moulding, foliage and quite grotesque heads. The tympanum, weathered by the north winds, has a figure with branches and leaves issuing from its mouth, a "green man". Its significance has puzzled many an antiquary: a favourite theory, I believe, is that it represents His Satanic Majesty consigning some of his victims to the flames! A tympanum over the south door has more characteristic Norman zig-zag carving.

The tower of St. Leonard's is of the usual heavy Norman character to be found in these parts.

About  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north west of Broseley, in a high and windy spot, crouching beside the Tudor splendour of Banthall Hall is the 17th century church of St. Bartholomew, Benthall, one of the few Salopian churches of that century. It was erected in 1667, following the destruction during the Civil War of the old church of St. Brice, a Celtic missionary of the 5th century. The building is quite characteristic of the late 17th century. A remarkable feature of it dates only from 1893, when the porch was added. On the turret is carved a lion's head with the words "De forte dulcendo" (From the strong comes forth sweetness). To quote Dr. Cranage, "In the lion's mouth are two holes, which communicate with two lockers in the gallery of the church. They are to accommodate bees!" As far as I know this is a unique architectural feature in a church of any period!

To conclude, it must be said that in an article of this size justice has not been done to some of these fine structures, particularly Barrow and Linley. The purpose is partly informative, but is much more to whet the appetite of lovers of beautiful buildings; and that, no doubt, will include most members of the Wilkinson Society. I hope that old residents will have borne with me patiently while they have read much that they already know. More recent residents to the district will, I hope, be inspired to visit these churches for themselves.

Dennis Mason

## WHERE WAS ABRAHAM DARBY I BURIED?

People interested in the history of Coalbrookdale and Broseley may well have been confused by the different burial places given in various works of reference for the first Abraham Darby. The older books, particularly the works of John Randall, say that he was buried at Broseley, and other books published before about 1960 have followed Randall. Then Dr. R.A. Mott, to whose work on the Coalbrookdale and Horschay ironworks everyone interested in local history is indebted, discovered in the Register of the Society of Friends for Herefordshire Worcestershire and Wales that Darby was said to have been buried at Bewdley. This seemed to be conclusive evidence, and most recent publications have accepted it. Then, when the future of the graveyard was called into question earlier this year, the subject was investigated by Mrs. Hutton of Beckbury, who discovered that the source of Dr. Mott's evidence was a copy made about 1840, one of many made by Nonconformists at this time when legislation compelled them to deposit their original registers in Somerset House. Mrs. Hutton traced the original at the Public Record Office and found that the entry read "Mary the Widow of Abraham Darby deceased the 1st day of the second month 1718 and was interred at Bewdley ye 3rd.... the 7th of 3rd mo.1717 her husband A.D. deceased was buried at Broseley". (Ref.RS6 1581 6795, or Book 666 p.61 in Friends House Register). This seems to establish beyond all doubt that Darby was buried in the graveyard of the Friends Meeting House in Broseley, and Mrs. Hutton deserves the grateful thanks of all local historians for her persistence.

Barrie Trinder

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### Broseley Railway

In 1880 a new railway was planned to reach Broseley. According to the deposited plans in Salop Record Office (No. 486 - 13th November, 1880), this railway was to run from a junction with the LNWR Hadley - Coalport line at the bottom of Lee Dingle across the River Severn to the town of Broseley.

Needless to say, it was never built. Broseley's only rail-link was the Severn Valley line (opened in 1862), with stations at Ironbridge, Coalport and later Jackfield serving the parish.

N.J.C.

THE MIGRATION OF POTTERY WORKERS BETWEEN  
STOKE-ON-TRENT AND THE BROSELEY AREA IN  
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Introduction

John Randall, in his contribution to the industrial section of the Victoria County History of Shropshire (1909), notes the links between the pottery industries in Stoke-on-Trent and Broseley in terms of migrating workers in both directions: in the middle of the sixteenth century from the Broseley area to Stoke-on-Trent, and in the early part of the eighteenth century from Stoke-on-Trent to the Broseley area. Evidence for such migrations is usually to be found in the parish or borough records of the place to which the person has moved, in the form of references to births, deaths and marriages, or in the form of examinations conducted under oath before magistrates of persons who have become unemployed and are therefore applying for relief under the Poor Law.

The Borough Archives at Much Wenlock, Shropshire, contain records of Poor Law Examinations for the periods 1729-1743, 1774-1777, and 1813-17 and include many cases referring to workers in the Broseley area, which was in the Borough of Wenlock at that time. Some of these workers were very closely connected with influential figures in the early history of English pottery, and the overall impression gained by the writer of these notes is that Broseley was a more important centre of the industry than is sometimes allowed. To enable the reader to draw his own conclusions, the relevant cases from the Much Wenlock Archives are quoted below in chronological order. It should be noted at this point that the original records vary considerably in depth and detail. In some cases the unemployed person under examination gives no more than his name, occupation, and place of birth; whereas in other cases, fortunately for posterity, he gives much more detail. Only the more detailed and therefore interesting records are quoted in full here; the remainder are **shortened** to essentials.

Extracts from the Much Wenlock Archives

- 1730 Examination of John Bell, a Potter, born in Handley Green, Stoke-on-Trent.
- 1731 Examination of Thomas Simpson, a Mugmaker, born in Stoak (sic) and worked there for one Richard Miles.
- 1731 Examination of Thomas Alcock, a Potter, born in Stoak and has been working for William Bird of Broseley for upwards of 7 years.
- 1732 Examination of Samuel Edge, a Mugmaker. Born in Burslem, Staffs., 26 years previously and apprenticed to John Symson as a Mugmaker.
- 1736 Examination of Thomas Toft, Plattermaker, born in the Parish of Kanham, Salop, his father James Toft being a certificated person from Stoak-upon-Trent in the county of Stafford.
- 1737 Examination of Thomas Symson, born in Stoak and worked there for one year for John Astbury, fourteen years since.

- 1739 Examination of John Thursfield, Potter, "Who upon his oath saith that he was born in the P rish of Stoke in the County of Stafford and that about 16 years ago he came to work in Jackfield in the Parish of Broseley under one Mr. Joseph Garner as a Potter and that he was there hired for seven years at seven shillings and sixpence a week the first five years and eight shillings a week the two last years and that he served a year and a quarter of the term and then marryed and has since served the remainder of his term agreed on as aforesaid and hath not done any thing to create himself a settlement in any other place."
- 1739 Examination of John Pope, a Potter, born in Stoke.
- 1739 Examination of Thomas Pope, a Potter, born in Stoke, came to Broseley 16 years previously to work for Joseph Garner.
- 1739 Examination of Thomas Toft (again!), adding this time that "about 14 years ago he was hired a year with William Bird of Broseley, Plattermaker. at three shillings a week meat, drink, washing and lodging."

And lastly a much later records:

- 1814 Examination of John Ashton, 75 years old, born in Lane End, Stoke-on-Trent and apprenticed for 7 years to William Turner, Stoke-on-Trent.

#### Inferences

1. Remembering that the evidence deals only with workmen who became unemployed, and noting the dates given by Alcock, Toft, Thursfield and Thomas Pope, it appears that there was a significant movement of pottery workers from Stoke-on-Trent to Broseley during the period 1723-25. The principal employers in Broseley at that time who took on such workers seem to have been William Bird and Joseph Garner. Trade apparently declined during the 1730's, rendering at least these recorded cases unemployed. There appears to have been three categories of worker, namely potter, mugmaker and plattermaker.
2. The case of Thomas Toft is of special interest because he states that his father was called James Toft and was a certificated person from Stoak-upon-Trent. It therefore seems highly probable that the Wenlock Thomas Toft was related to the famous Staffordshire Tofts, Ralph Toft (b.1638), Thomas Toft (d.1689), and James Toft (b.1637). A further piece of somewhat circumstantial evidence is given by the fact that the Wenlock document carries an actual signature "Thomas Toft" rather than just a mark: it was unusual for these workers to be able to write their names, but if Thomas Toft was related to the Staffordshire family he might have been expected to do so, because they all signed their work with their full names.
3. The case of Thomas Symson is of special interest because he states that he worked for a year for a John Astbury in Stoke-on-Trent, in 1723. The important and famous early English potter John Astbury operated in Stoke-on-Trent from about 1700, until 1743: so it is highly probably that he was the man who employed Thomas Symson in 1723.

4. The case of John Thursfield is of special interest because he states that he arrived in Jackfield in 1723 to work as a potter under one Joseph Garner, and was married fifteen months later. The first part of this statement contradicts Randall in two respects, when he says that John Thursfield came to Jackfield in 1713 to take over an existing works. However, the second part of John Thursfield's statement is generally consistent with Randall when he says that John Thursfield was the father of the Maurice Thursfield who is mentioned by many writers as the operator of the Jackfield pottery prior to Blakeway and Rose. John Thursfield was married around 1724-25, so a son could have taken over his pottery at any time between about 1745 and 1785: and Blakeway and Rose started their operations in Jackfield soon after 1785.
5. The isolated and later case of John Ashton is of special interest for two principal reasons: he was apprenticed in Lane End, Stoke on Trent, to a well-known concern which eventually manufactured porcelain; and the year in which he became unemployed, 1814, is the year in which Caughley was closed. Without stretching the evidence beyond reason, it seems possible that John Ashton, having been trained under the Turners at Lane End around 1753-60, came to Caughley, perhaps in its early days, and remained there for the remainder of his working life, to become unemployed there at the age of 75, when the factory closed.

### Conclusions

The evidence from the Much Wenlock Archives confirms and dates the eighteenth century links between the pottery industries in ~~Stoke-on-Trent~~ and Broseley, mentioned by Randall and others. Apart from this general confirmation, there are seen to be specific cases linking Broseley with the Toft family, with John Astbury and, slightly later, with the Turner factory at Lane End. In addition it is seen that Randall's account of John Thursfield's early years in the Broseley area is not quite accurate.

Finally, there arises, in the case of John Ashton, the interesting possibility that a workman trained by the Turners at Lane End, and therefore being familiar with porcelain manufacture, eventually became a much valued worker at the Caughley factory and remained there until the factory was closed, when he was 75 years old.

### Acknowledgements

The research upon which these notes are based was carried out under the auspices of the University of Birmingham Department of Extramural Studies during the 1973-4 Session. The classes were held in the Much Wenlock Corn Exchange on Tuesday evenings under the Tutorship of Mr. M.D.G. Wanklyn, and the writer is extremely grateful to him for his guidance throughout, and to the other members of the group for their advice at various points.

Maurice Hawes

## JOHN WILKINSON'S TRADE TOKENS

After 1775 the Royal Mint suspended the striking of copper coins and therefore the need for small change had to be answered by the issue of what are now known as industrial tokens. Copper half-pennies, countermarked in 1786 by the Adelphi Cotton Company, Deanston, Perthshire, seem to have been the first to appear: these were to pass as 4s. 6d. In 1787, Thomas Williams, the "Copper King" struck coins of farthing halfpenny and penny denominations, bearing a druid's head upon them. Wilkinson, a partner of Williams in many copper ventures in North Wales and Cornwall, soon followed suit and between 1787 and 1798 his money was circulated in several Midland, Western and Welsh counties. As well as copper coinage, tokens of silver and leather were issued, along with guinea notes and this money was used for large scale commercial transactions, apart from payment of wages. Wilkinson, like others (Coalbrookdale, for instance) was forced to do this due to the aforementioned lack of small change but one suspects that here was a wonderful opportunity for self-advertisement, a chance not to be missed; for while Williams, Reynolds, Darby and others merely mentioned their companies (Parys Mines Company, for example, in the case of the former) Wilkinson, alone of industrial token issuers, had his own effigy stamped on his coins, together with the words - JOHN WILKINSON, IRON MASTER! The only face to appear on British coins of the 18th Century is that of the monarch, with, of course, the exception of John Wilkinson. He literally "made" money, too: his coins were at 32 to the pound weight, which made them 2s. 8d. at face value per pound. He paid 1s. 11d. per pound (the mint charge) for these, thus making a profit of 9d. per pound, say 40% and he ordered them by the ton! Odd forgeries appeared too and one of these shows perhaps a knowledge of Wilkinson's character as it bears the legends: "And he said, Let us make pennys after my own image"! Wilkinson's tokens show on the edges the places where they would be redeemable: Willey, Snedshill, Bersham and Bradley, at first and later on, Anglesey, London and Liverpool. The forgeries have some interesting places: Beccles, Warley Camp, Ballymurtagh and The Temple of the Muses.

Contrary to local legends around Bersham, Broseley and Bilston, Wilkinson did not have his own mints at these places though he may have had a store for coins at these centres of operations. His tokens were at first supplied by Matthew Boulton, who patented a steam-powered mint, and John Westwood. The latter seems to have been unable to cope with the iron-master's demands for by 1792 Wilkinson was dealing solely with Boulton for his tokens. Boulton replied to Wilkinson: "You have been petitioning Westwood for 15 cwt. of coin weekly. Allow me to remark that I expended more than ten guineas in dies to coin for you - cwt. of copper and that when I found you had pitted Westwood against me I stopped short..... yet nevertheless if you choose to order any quantity of halfpence worth engraving new dies for, I will contract to make you as many per week as you please." (Oct. 1790). In accepting this offer Wilkinson replied (8 Dec. 1790): "I shall be perfectly content provided I can have about 5 tons more speedily, which are in immediate demand. A further quantity will be wanted for 1791. The old forge, as well as my resurrection upon it, is approved by those who have seen it as well as by yours ever, John Wilkinson." On Dec. 11th however, Wilkinson complained

that the halfpence were four in the pound less in number than those which Westwood used to make for him and he asked for coins of "proper size" and ended with the moan, "If you knew my distress in the want of copper I think you would have supplied me sooner." In February, 1791 he ordered a ton of coin from Westwood and in the same month, another order was placed with Boulton. In this letter he said that he was willing "to be plastered again" if Boulton wanted a new die for the effigy. In October, 1792, he launched a further attack on Boulton: It has been from inaction or indecision on your part that I have been obliged to get any of that article elsewhere.....beefsteak to a man that is hungry will be preferred to venison, where waiting for it is a condition."

On March 3rd. 1797 he informed Boulton: "I am engaged in preparing small notes for my workmen as change, similar to what I issued in '73 and '74 previous to Sir George Savile's Act. That was a measure I then adopted on the great scarcity of silver which since has been plentifully supplied by the coiners of bad money. Good notes will cure the evil of base metal better and more effectively than the gallows." The ban resulting from Savile's Act of 1775 was not due to be lifted until 1798. Wilkinson's brother, in a letter to Watt in March, 1797, describes these notes as "a new coinage of 1/- . 6d. 3d. notes on cards." These may well be the leather tokens cashable in Wrexham but so far none of these have been discovered: however, the Wrexham historian, A.N. Palmer, in his booklet, "John Wilkinson and the Old Bersham Ironworks", prints a copy of a Wilkinson guinea note, issued by his Brymbo trustees, 18th January, 1814. The Wilkinson coat-of-arms appears on it and it is quite likely to be a descendant of the 1797/98 issues.

To return to the examples of Wilkinson money which does, not infrequently, make appearance, the copper coins. The first issues were in 1787 with the name wrongly spelt, as WILKISON; on one side, and this appeared with each yearly issue, was the face of the ironmaster himself, a right profile, surrounded by the words, JOHN WILKISON IRON MASTER. On the edge were the names of some of his concerns, Bersham, Bradley, Broseley; on the reverse side, a different design appeared each year, though designs of previous years were repeated. In 1787, a worker is shown putting a lump of iron under an automatic hammer; for 1788, a boat is shown, not necessarily the iron boat; for 1790, a woman leans on a cog-wheel; for 1791, with the name now misspelt WILKESON, a naked man (Vulcan?), sits holding a hammer over an anvil and the rigging of a ship is just visible. Around the edge are the names, Bradley, Bersham, Willey and Snedshill. For 1792, the words on the edge said, Payable at London or Anglesey and the design shows a crown surmounting a harp, with the words, NORTH WALES.. Quite often, a 1792 issue shows the 1791 design. In 1793, there is a new effigy, Wilkinson doubtless having been "plastered again": on the reverse a woman holds a pair of scales, there is a Latin legend, MIA PECUNIA and on the edge the town names Birmingham, Brighton, Liverpool. Coins can be seen in the Coalbrookdale Museum and Bilston Art Gallery while Wrexham Public Library has the following coins:- 1787(3), 1788(1), 1790(4), 1792(1), 1793(1), 1795(1). The silver token of 1788, worth then 3s. 6d., is rarely reported.

Perhaps "The New London Magazine" of December, 1787, should be allowed the final word on Wilkinson's copper coins:-

"In Greece and Rome your men of parts,  
Renowned in arms, or formed in arts,  
On splendid coins and medals shone  
To make their deeds and persons known.  
So, Wilkinson, from this example  
Gives of himself a matchless sample.  
And bids the 'Iron Monarch' pass  
Like his own metal wrapt in brass!  
Which shows his modesty and sense  
And how and where he made his pence!  
As Iron when 'tis brought in traction  
Collects the copper by attraction  
So, thus in him 'twas very proper  
To stamp his brazen face... on copper."

Wayne Turner.

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Water pipes or cannon?

The following is extracted from "The Town of Chepstow, Part I : Riverside", by Ivor Waters (The Chepstow Society, 41 Hardwick Avenue, Chepstow, Mon., price 30p.).

"The old name of ....part of Riverside was Gunstock Wharf. Here in 1781 John Byng saw 'incredible numbers of iron water pipes (like cannon) each 9 feet long and weighing about 800 weight which are going to France (by permission) but whether for the Paris aqueducts, or the King's water works is not knowb'. There were nearly twenty-one miles of pipes weighing about 4,900 tons. John and William Wilkinson the ironmasters did manage to export two cargoes of steam-engine parts and water-pipes to France in 1780 and 1781, in spite of war-time controls. These cargoes sailed from Chepstow in the sloop 'Mary'. The pipes were alleged to be 'really cannon in disguise' (Torrington Diaries, I:24; History Today, May 1951, p.67; E.Vale: Shropshire, p. 205)."

For the truth of the matter, see the next issue of the Journal.

N.J.C.

## THE SOCIETY'S COLLECTION OF INDUSTRIAL RELICS

Most members have seen something of our small collection of industrial relics but may not be aware of more recent additions. These additions have made the collection more comprehensive and it could now form the basis of a local industrial museum.

For convenience this outline deals with the collection in sections, starting with general examples of early domestic iron work, cast and hand wrought. These are chiefly quite commonplace objects, flat irons, pots, tongs and other domestic tools, but we do have, on loan, an outstanding example of ornamental cast iron work in the form of an early oil stove. Another interesting example of cast iron work is a memorial plaque to a Mr. Job Barker of Lightmoor Ironworks who died in 1821, aged 65 years. Mr. Barker would no doubt have been very interested in the launching of the first iron boat.

A very recent addition to this section is an early draughtsman's desk which once graced the offices of the Lilleshall Company. A large cast iron clock face and weathervane were obtained in the hope that they came from the old Broseley Town Hall, but inquiries have shown that they did not. Although additions to this section would be welcome, especially any with local connection, it does already show something of the development and range of the use of iron for domestic purposes even before the days of canned food and motor cars.

The section dealing with John Wilkinson's significant contribution to the development of machine tools and the steam engine necessarily consists of models, diagrams and pictures. The models could be improved but only with considerable labour or expense. However, as much of Wilkinson's work in this direction, at least in the early stages, must have been done at Willey, a local industrial museum should make a major feature of this section. With the exception of the New Willey Ironworks and possibly, if we are very lucky, Bersham, Wilkinson's various industrial activities in Shropshire, Denbigh and South Staffordshire can only be represented by maps and pictures.

We do have a few relics from Willey and can reasonably expect that more will be forthcoming in the future. We have a cannon ball and an interesting plaque which reads "??? Lord Forester Willey Park Ironworks". There is also an example of a cast iron miner's lamp found at The Dean Farm. It is hoped that the Society will soon be in a position to make some effort in this direction. It would be unfortunate if important finds were made by other societies or individuals who took them out of the district.

It is convenient to include Wilkinson's coins in this section and here the collection is rather lacking; we only have two of many known variations, but at least one of these is possibly unique. This specimen is not really a coin but a medallion advertising Wilkinson's coinage. The obverse shows Wilkinson's head with the normal surrounding inscription "John Wilkinson Ironmaster". The reverse which, incidentally, is upside down shows a figure of Justice with scales and a shield which bears the inscription "Engraver and Die Sinker". The surround reads "Medals and Commercial Coins". In place of a date there appears "??a Pecunia" which could presumably be interpreted "My Coins".

It is known that Wilkinson supplied coins to other industrialists but it is usually accepted that they were all made for him by Boulton and others. This 'find' seems to indicate that Wilkinson did actually make at least some coins of his own.

The medallion is in almost mint condition but appears to have been badly struck on an undersized blank so that some of the letters are either truncated or missing. Whatever the reason for making it, this specimen would have been a very bad advertisement and would hardly likely to have been offered as such. It is fascinating to speculate: was it a 'trial run' or one made 'on the side' and then pocketed by the workman? Does its survival in the area indicate that it was made locally? If so is there some truth in the local tradition that Wilkinson made coins in the house near the Lawns now known as Church View?

At present by far the largest section of the collection concerns the Broseley and Jackfield ceramic industries. We have a representative selection of encaustic tiles and others from both Maws and Craven Dunnhill, together with a complete mosaic from the latter. Also from Craven Dunnhill are some fine ornamental tile moulds and moulds for slipware. Inquiries have shown that this slipware was made as Christmas presents for favoured customers. Caughley is at present only represented by broken bits of china and a maul from the Caughley pit found 70 ft. underground. From Benthall we have flower pots and tiles but at present no pottery.

The Broseley clay pipe industry is represented by a very modest collection of clay pipes which could be improved, and a few dolls arms. It appears that the clay pipe makers made heads and limbs for the old well loved sawdust dolls.

Some effort has been made to do justice to the great Broseley roofing tile industry and we now have specimens from eleven of the fourteen or so tileries known to have operated. We would appeal to members to pick up any unusual tiles they may see, especially if there is a name on them. From the Broseley tileries we also have two attractive traveller's samples, one a model of a hand made and one a model of a machine made tile.

The last major portable relic of the Broseley roofing tile industry a tile cart, was bought by the Society and steps have been taken to salvage the rails which ran across the road between the Deep Pit and the Tileries. Onions Foundry in Foundry Lane is represented by a plaque with the Royal Arms believed to be from a patent seed sowing machine: a wooden pattern and some iron roof trusses, purlins and rafters from the pattern shops.

We have a rail from the Coneybury Ironworks and some parts of trams from a mine at Benthall but as yet nothing from the great ironworks at Calcutts and Benthall. The last and possibly most outstanding single item is a considerable collection of Cabinet-maker's Wheelwright's and Blacksmith's tools, mostly from the workshop of Mr. Bert Meredith who operated in Broseley. These are outside the pattern of the main collection but fit the general picture of the age and are of great interest.

It is not the policy of the Society to run a composite museum or to collect original material better stored elsewhere. Our aim is to depict Broseley industries and Wilkinson's contribution to the Industrial Revolution. Judging from the comments of many visitors, we think we have had some success. On the other hand it can be seen that the collection is by no means complete and we do ask our members to keep an eye open for relevant material. In some cases the Society is prepared to buy items of special interest.

The collection, at present housed at The Lawns, can normally be seen from 2 to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Arrangements can usually be made for parties from schools and other organisations outside these hours.

Ralph Pee

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#### New Willey Ironworks

Our knowledge of the industrial archaeology of the New Willey Ironworks area has been increased by the work of Mr. Machin and others. Mr. Pee writes:-

"Although little remains of the buildings this is perhaps the only major 18th century ironworks site in the area which has not had a road built through it, been built over or afforested.

But, in spite of the fact that the site is practically unspoiled and is in the centre of 'Our Parish' we know very little of the layout of the works. What little we do know is due to the happy choice of the site by Mr. Bob Machin for an archaeological exercise some ten years ago, and as members will remember, his generosity in giving us the benefit of his discoveries at the Society's last meeting.

We now know, without serious doubt, the site of the furnace, the coking hearths and possibly some of the missing cottages. Without undue optimism, there does seem some possibility that the furnace, now covered, may still be virtually intact. Its position does, however, throw some doubt on the function of the large building close by (now used as a dwelling): or even if it was part of the original works at all.

There is every hope that fresh evidence will become available at some future date and the possibility of being able to provide some details of this historically important works is very attractive.

It is possible that some of our older members may remember some physical features or stories told of Willey Furnace. If so, do please make them known: such knowledge is so easily lost for ever."

We may, in fact, have something to learn from the only other comparable ironworks site in east Shropshire - the Bedlam (Madeley Wood) Furnaces. Although there were obvious differences (in situation, water supply, ownership, etc.), the furnaces at Bedlam and New Willey were erected in the same period (1757-59) and closed probably for the same reasons in the early 19th century - shortage of raw materials, particularly iron-stone. The detailed plan of Bedlam Furnaces in 1772 and the recent excavation and restoration of the site by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum should be of particular interest to us in our researches into the history and industrial archaeology of New Willey.

N.J.C.