

**BROSELEY
LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY**



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EDITORIAL

Broseley Local History Society

The Society was originally formed as the Wilkinson Society in 1972 and was renamed in 1997 to reflect its main purpose:

‘the research, preservation and promotion of Broseley’s unique heritage’.

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month beginning at 7.30 pm, at Broseley Social Club; and annual events include a spring walk, summer outing, and a winter dinner. Members receive a quarterly newsletter and an annual journal. The Society’s collection of artefacts is at present in storage, with some items on display at Broseley Cemetery Chapel.

The Society has a web site which contains information about Broseley, copies of the newsletter and articles from previous journals. This can be found at www.broseley.org.uk

The Journal

The journal is published annually. The four articles in this issue represent the ongoing research of Society members and others, and we are grateful to individual contributors, Our thanks also to Steve Dewhirst for design and typesetting.

Contributions for the next issue would be welcome and should be sent to the editor, Neil Clarke, Cranleigh, Little Wenlock, TF6 5BH
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Eustace Beard

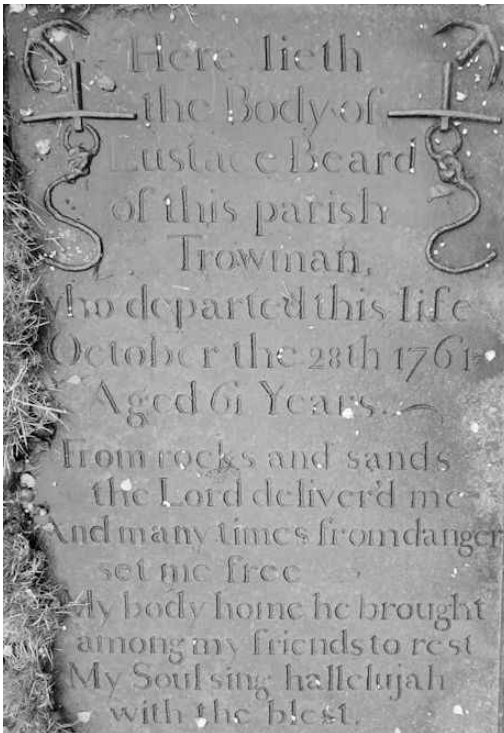
by Alan Crosby

In early August, visiting the charming late Elizabethan house at Benthall, near Broseley between Ironbridge and Much Wenlock, I had a look at the pleasant little church, which is historically interesting since it was rebuilt in 1667-1668 having been burned out in the Civil War. It has some nice but very old-fashioned Jacobean-style wooden fittings, which must have looked really passé in the mid-1660s. The church and the hall make a lovely grouping, with the grassy churchyard sloping gently to the south and the lovely house and gardens to the north.

I tripped over a slab lying beside the path on the south side of the chancel, and was immediately intrigued and wanted to know more. Long ago I read an essay by the late Robert Robinson in which he described

motoring through Tuscany and coming without warning across a wonderful hill town. Back in England he excitedly told people, only to be informed that this ‘undiscovered’ place, San Gimignano was one of the most famous tourist attractions in Italy. Robinson, however, was unabashed: ‘I’d had all the pleasures of a tourist shrine without knowing that’s what it was’.

I shared the same feeling, albeit on a far less imposing scale, at Benthall. The grave slab that had first caught my foot now caught my eye, for two reasons. First, it was made of iron; and second, it was decorated with a matching pair of relief emblems, showing broken anchors, a small ring and a length of rope. And then there



Iron grave slab of Eustice Beard

was the inscription: ‘Here lieth the Body of Eustace Beard of this Parish Trowman, who departed this life October the 28th Aged 61 Years’. A trowman was a sailor on the River Severn, plying his trade on a trow, the flat-bottomed masted cargo vessels which took goods up and down the river and into the Bristol Channel.

This was followed by a touching verse: ‘From rocks and sands / the Lord delivered me / And many times from danger / set me free / My body home he brought / among my friends to rest / My soul sing hallelujah / with the blest.’ So, what a discovery I thought – obviously people knew about the grave, because the hall receives many visitors, but I could do a bit of historical investigation and find out more. Surely nobody has researched Eustace before?

I returned home and just thought I’d check a couple of the secondary sources before I rushed off to the record office in Hereford for some groundbreaking research. Alas, I really should have learned a lesson which I often tell students: never imagine that your discovery is unique, and never suppose that it is a new discovery to anybody but you. It might already be well-known and you could be the ignorant one (as with Robert Robinson seeing for the first time that medieval Manhattan, the towers of San Gimignano). For so it proved. I should indeed have known better for – perfect obvious in retrospect – if anybody else had come across Eustace it would be my good friend Barrie Trinder, much of whose highly-productive professional life has been spent researching the industrial and transport revolutions in the Severn Gorge, on which subject he is THE expert.

Oh, foolish Alan, to imagine that Eustace Beard was news. Pulling from my shelf Trinder’s *The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire* (first published 1973, third edition 2000) I see not only a whole section devoted to the trows of the Broseley stretch of the river, but also references to the Beard family and a photograph of the grave slab itself (though mine’s better, Barrie!). I turn to the definitive *Miners and Mariners of the Severn Gorge*, edited by Barrie Trinder and Nancy Cox (also 2000), and there’s a couple of pages all about the Beard family, a specific reference to the fact that ‘Eustace Beard died in 1761 and is commemorated by an iron tomb in Benthall churchyard’, and in the plate pages there is that very same photograph. Well, the discovery gave me a little thrill – and the grave has plenty of historical interest. What next, I wonder?

(Reproduced with permission from ‘Local History News’, the newsletter of the British Association for Local History)

The Bogus Curate of Broseley 'Will no-one rid me of this turbulent priest?'

by Janet Doody

In January 1817 William Charles Gregory became curate at St. Leonard's Church, Broseley; by December 1818 he was aboard a convict ship to Australia having been convicted of forgery.

Laurence Halloran, alias Laurence Hynes/Hines/Henry Halloran, alias William Charles Gregory, was born about 1765 in County Meath, Ireland. He was brought up by his uncle, Judge William Gregory (at one time Chief Justice of Quebec, Canada, 1764-66), and was sent to Christ's Hospital School in Horsham. In 1781 he enlisted in the Navy, was arrested, then acquitted for the murder of a fellow seaman, but was discharged in 1784.



Laurence Halloran – attributed to Augustus Earle c1825-27

State Library of New South Wales

On 30th June 1784 he married Mary Boucher at Alplingham, near Exeter where he had become headmaster of an Academy, and where he had the first of his many children, Laurence (1785), Teresa (1786), Joseph (1789) and Henry (1793). It was just before the birth of Henry that he renounced his Roman Catholic faith to follow the Church of England tenet, but "never won the Anglican ordination he wanted".¹ Around 1797 he re-joined the Navy, this time posing as a chaplain, and in 1800 was awarded a doctorate in divinity at King's College, Aberdeen.

Around this time too, he appears to have met Lydia Ann Recketts Hall (who may have been his niece) and abandoned his first wife and family. He

possibly (bigamously) married Lydia (although no notice has yet been discovered) and the first of their children, Laura (1804) and another Laurence (1807). were born in London.

Following his service at sea, Laurence was posted as chaplain in 1807 to the naval and military forces at the Cape of Good Hope; Lydia joined him and a further two children were born there, Charlotte (1809) and Henry (1811). He initially prospered in South Africa, combining his chaplaincy with the headship of a grammar school; then in 1810 he defended two officers charged with duelling, which annoyed the Commander of Forces, General H. G. Grey. He then further disobeyed an order by refusing to take up the post of chaplain at Simonstown. Halloran subsequently resigned his commission and then exacerbated his position by publishing a number of libellous verses. He was prosecuted by the Governor, found guilty of “defamatory libel”², fined heavily and banished from the Cape.

On his return to England, financially and professionally ruined, between 1812 and 1818 “he drifted impecuniously from county to county”.³ Although Austin also states he was separated from his wife and family, they obviously met occasionally as a further four children were born: Arthur (1813), Eleanor (1814), Lydia (1816) and William (1817).

During this “drifting” he often found employment as a curate. His first duty in Broseley was the burial of John Jones, age 73, on 1st February 1817; then on 17th February 1817 he baptised Ann, the daughter of Thomas and Mary Lloyd. He also officiated at a seventeen marriages, from John Reynolds and Sarah Boden also on the 17th February to Richard Lloyd and Maris Dudley on 25th May 1818 (Were these couples later regarded as legally married?). It was eventually discovered that Halloran, alias Gregory, had used forged letters to authenticate his ordination. In 1818 he was indicted on a charge of “counterfeiting a ten-penny frank in the name of Sir William Garrow M.P., allegedly for the purpose of accrediting himself as a curate”.⁴

Sir William Garrow (Does anyone remember the T.V. series ‘Garrow’s Law’ 2009-2011?) was a barrister and later a judge, who introduced the phrase “presumed innocent until proven guilty”⁵ and also helped “usher in the adversarial court system used in most common law nations today”.⁶ He was elected Member of Parliament for Gatton, Surrey; and this entitled him to the privilege of ‘Free Frank’ which allowed official business free postage. At a time of costly postal rates, this system was readily open to abuse; so in 1764 an Act of Parliament was brought in



William Garrow
Wikipedia

that ordered a hand stamp to be added to the mail together with a statutory sentence of transportation for seven years for anyone found guilty of forgery.

Laurence Halloran's trial, under his various aliases, took place at the Old Bailey; he was found guilty and sentenced to transportation to Australia. The convict ship 'Baring' set sail in December 1818, arriving in New South Wales on 26th June 1819. During this time another child, Catherine, had been born on 18th April in London. Almost

immediately on his arrival in Sydney, Halloran was granted a ticket of leave (a sort of parole document) by

the Governor, probably through contacts made in South Africa. He was also assisted in setting up 'Dr Halloran's establishment for liberal education,' a private school also known as the Sydney Grammar School. It opened in January 1820 and quickly secured the support of the leading emancipists in Sydney; and in 1822 his 'second family', together with their mother Lydia, joined him in New South Wales.

This should have been a prosperous and successful opportunity for Halloran, but his "fatal flair for writing defamatory doggerel kept him constantly engaged in ligation"⁷ and, as a consequence, poverty. He was almost continually on the move to escape his creditors and suffered several periods in jail. Then sadly, after just a year in Australia, Lydia died after the birth of her twelfth child. The following year Halloran married Elizabeth Turnbull, who was aged 17 (he was 59). They probably first met on the convict ship (the Turnbull family were travelling as passengers), and she was to have at least another four of his children.

PROPOSALS
 FOR THE
FOUNDATION AND SUPPORT
 OF A
PUBLIC
FREE GRAMMAR SCHOOL,
 IN THE
TOWN OF SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES;
 RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED TO THE
 CONSIDERATION OF THE GOVERNOR & COUNCIL;
 AND OF THE
 INHABITANTS OF THAT INTERESTING COLONY;

BY
LAURENCE HALLORAN, D. D.
Professor of the Classics, and of Mathematics.

SYDNEY :
 PRINTED BY R. HOWE, GOVERNMENT PRINTER,
 1825.

A number of influential men had acknowledged Halloran as a gifted teacher, having a “skill in the art of instruction”⁸ despite flaws in his character. In November 1825 he found support to open and become headmaster, with his son as undermaster, of the Sydney Free Grammar School. But within a year he received reprimands from the school governors in consequence of “unsatisfactory behaviour”⁹, and by the end of the year the School Trustees suspended its operation and dismissed Halloran.

Finding himself once again unemployed, Halloran reopened his private school in early 1827 and on 5th April of the same year published the first issue of the short-lived *Gleaner* newspaper. It ran to just 26 issues, ceasing publication in September 1827, its failure probably due as much as anything to the

inept owner’s lack of business sense. In 1828, the Governor of New South Wales, Lt. General Ralph Darling, took pity on Halloran and appointed him coroner for Sydney, but soon had to dismiss him when he threatened to publish a defamation of Archdeacon Scott with whom he had fallen out.

After a most extraordinary life of poet, journalist, un-ordained clergyman, convicted felon, pioneer schoolmaster who became founder of Sydney Grammar School, possible bigamist and father of about 19 children, Laurence Hynes Halloran died on 8th March 1831 and was buried with his former wife Lydia in Sydney Cemetery .

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/>



Centre of a three part panorama (of Sydney) by Major James Taylor, painted c1817-1822

Sydney Living Museums

Sources:

National Library of Australia web site
(<https://www.naa.gov.au/>)

Australian Dictionary of Biography, 'Halloran Laurence Haynes (1765-1831), by A. G. Austin (notes 1-4, 7-9)
(<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/halloran-laurence-hynes-2149>)

William Garrow (notes 5&6)
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Garrow)

The Foresters of Watling Street, Dothill and Willey

by Neil Clarke

(This is an edited version of the talk given at the joint meeting with the Friends of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum in November 2018)

Introduction

The Forester family has had a recorded presence in East Shropshire for something like 800 years. Earliest references are in the Wellington area in the late 12th century, and the family went on to play a significant role in the history of Wellington, so much so that part of their coat of arms was incorporated into the crest of the town, both the unofficial original one from the 1890s and that authorised by the College of Arms in 1951. The prominent feature in all three is the bugle or hunting horn – a reference to the family's origin.

If the Forester fortunes originated in the Wellington area, the family did increasingly have wider interests, following marriages which brought new land ownership. This paper will cover:

- a general outline of the family at Watling Street, Dothill and Willey
- the extent of their estates by the end of the 19th century
- Forester involvement in politics, the army and the church
- their economic interests
- the Forester legacy.

Watling Street

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

The first recorded member of the Forester family was Hugh, in the late 12th century. The forestership descended mostly from father to son and by the late 15th century was held by Edward Forester. It was this Edward, described as 'of Watling Street', who probably built the first part of the Old Hall in about 1480, the timber structure of two storeys that runs parallel with Watling Street. The family's wealth and



The Old Hall, Watling Street

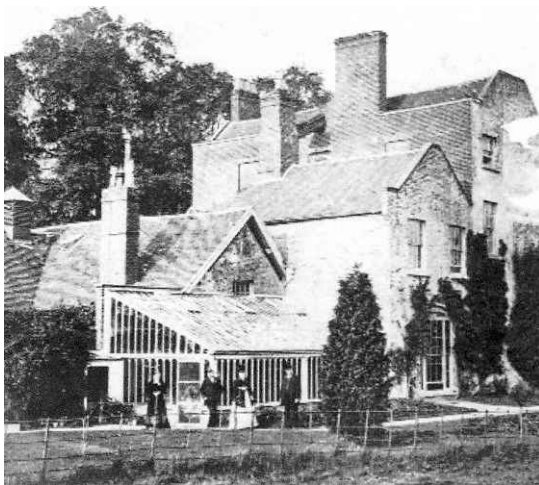
importance was greatly added to by Edward's successors, and of particular note was his long-lived grandson John. This John was a member of Henry VIII's court, where he was described as 'yeoman of the chamber'; and he was granted a special privilege by the king in 1520. In a deed of that year, he is referred to as 'our trusty and well beloved John Forster of Wellington, gentleman', who, because of 'certain diseases and infirmities which he hath in his head, he cannot conveniently, without his great danger and jeopardy, be discovered of the same', his majesty licenses him 'to use and wear his bonnet on his said head at all times and in all places, as well as in our presence as elsewhere'. Remarkably, we can see John in the royal procession on the occasion of the meeting of Henry VIII's with Francis I of France at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Of the six attendants immediately attached to the person of the English sovereign, four are bare headed, but two are covered – John Forester and Richard Verney. (Richard Verney had also been granted the privilege of wearing a hat in the king's presence.)

In addition to his early years at court, John Forester was also a Member of Parliament for the Borough of Wenlock between 1529 and 1536. He qualified to represent the borough because of property held at Huntington in Little Wenlock parish. John acquired, through his wife Joyce, land at Upton, to the west of Wellington, and in 1555 he also acquired the freehold of Wellington Hay. His long eventful life ended in 1586..

John's grandson, Francis Forester, built a new wing onto the Old Hall around 1620 – the Jacobean structure with its gabled end toward the roadway. He also acquired the manor of Little Wenlock from Sir John Hayward in 1623. Francis's grandson, also named Francis, was probably the last head of the family to live at the Old Hall, for his son William inherited the Dothill estate. This was the result of the first of the three marriages which brought property and wealth to the Foresters. After moving to Dothill, the family leased the Old Hall on Watling Street, but retained ownership until 1926.

Dothill

The Dothill estate was on the northern edge of Wellington. The Foresters acquired Dothill (together with the manor of Wellington) from the Steventon family. The Steventons, originally from Preston upon the Wealdmoors, had come into possession of the Dothill estate in 1431 when William Steventon married Alice, daughter and heiress of Robert Horton of Dothill. In the early 17th century, a descendant of this marriage, also named William, enlarged the late medieval house at Dothill, creating a five-bayed range together with formal gardens. William was succeeded in 1647 by his grandson, Richard Steventon, whose widowed mother married Francis Forester (III). It was the child of this second marriage, William Forester, who inherited Dothill in 1659, following the death of his unmarried half-brother, Richard Steventon.



Dothill House

(courtesy Allan Frost)

William Forester, the new owner of Dothill, took a keen interest in politics. An opponent of the Catholic James II, he supported the Glorious Revolution and was made a Knight of the Bath by a grateful William III in 1689. He represented the Borough of Wenlock in Parliament as a Whig for many years. In 1700, his daughter, Mary, at the age of 13, was betrothed to 15 year old George Downing, who had been brought up in the Forester household.

However, the subsequent marriage was not a happy one. In 1704, Mary, who was classed as quite a beauty, became a maid of honour at Queen Anne's Court against her husband's wishes and after ten years they separated. George Downing, who inherited his father's knighthood, did not include Mary in his will, and at his death and that of his childless cousin his estate was left to found a college at Cambridge – Downing College.

Sir William Forester's immediate successors increased the family's wealth by marriage: his son, also named William, married Catherine, heiress of William Brooke of Clerkenwell, and his grandson, Brooke Forester, married Elizabeth, heiress of George Weld of Willey, in 1734. Brooke left Dothill to live at Willey Old Hall, but returned to Dothill following the death of his father in 1758. In fact, Brooke was the last head of the Forester family to live at Dothill: he died there in 1774 and was buried, like his predecessors, in Wellington. His second wife and daughter continued to live there, but eventually it was occupied by tenants until it was sold to Ernest Groom in 1918. The 5th Baron Forester had died the previous year and, as with many estates, land had to be sold to cover death duties. In fact, not just Dothill itself but most of the Forester property in Wellington and Little Wenlock was sold in sales of that year, 1918. Of the remainder, the Old Hall as I said earlier was sold in 1926, and the Ercall Woods towards the end of the century, leaving just half an acre or so alongside the reservoir near the Buckatree Hotel belonging to the family.

Willey

The Foresters acquired Willey from the Weld family. The manor of Willey, with its appurtenances in the Broseley area, had been sold in 1618 by Sir Francis Lacon to John Weld, who was a rich town clerk in London. He was knighted in 1642 for services to the Crown and died in 1666. The Weld family home was Willey Old Hall. John's great grandson, George Weld, who died in 1748, was succeeded by a daughter, Elizabeth, who had married Brooke Forester of Dothill. And so Brooke Forester acquired the Willey estate in 1748.

Brooke's son, George, the so-called hunting squire, was born at Willey Old Hall in 1738 and lived there all his life. He remained a bachelor and, on his death in 1811, Willey and all his other estates, including Watling Street, Dothill, and Little Wenlock, passed to his cousin, Cecil Forester. Acknowledging the family's other roots, Cecil adopted the name Weld-Forester.; and it was he who had the grandly Neo-classical new hall built between 1813 and 1820. In 1821, Cecil was created 1st



Old Willey Hall

Baron Forester of Willey; and he and his eight successors have continued to live at Willey Hall:

- Cecil Weld-Forester, 1st Baron Forester, from 1821 to 1828
- John George W-F, 2nd Baron, 1828-1874) sons
- George Cecil W-F, 3rd Baron, 1874-1886) of
- Orlando Watkin W-F, 4th Baron, 1886-1894) 1st Baron
- Cecil Theodore W-F, 5th Baron, 1894-1917
- George Cecil Beaumont W-F, 6th Baron, 1917-1932
- Cecil George Wilfred W-F, 7th Baron, 1932-1977
- George Cecil Brooke W-F, 8th Baron, 1977-2004
- Charles Richard George W-F, 9th Baron, 2004- .

From the time of Brooke Forester's son, George, the hunting squire, members of the Forester family have been buried at Willey.

The size of the Forester estates

Following their acquisition of Willey in 1748, the Foresters improved the estate's farms and extended the parkland, and by the middle of the 19th century they had expanded the estate in areas to the south, east and west of Broseley, including Broseley itself, Barrow, Wyke and Wigwig, Caughley, Linley and Benthall.



Willey New Hall

In fact, the combined Dothill and Willey estates made the Forester holdings the third largest in this part of the county by the end of the nineteenth century. This chart shows how the area of land owned by the Foresters compared with other local estates:

Cleveland /Raby estate (Lord Barnard).....	25,604 acres
Lilleshall estate (Duke of Sutherland).....	17,295 acres
Dothill and Willey estates (Forester).....	14,891 acres
Madeley Court and Apley Park estates (Foster).....	8,547 acres
Attingham estate (Lord Berwick).....	5,553 acres
Wombridge and Apley estates (Charlton-Meyrick).....	3,911 acres
Eyton estate (Eyton).....	3,749 acres
(The Orleton estate, belonging to the Herberts on the western edge of Wellington, was also just under 4,000 acres.)	

Looking at the list, it should be remembered that Forester landowning was drastically reduced in 1918 when they sold their property at Dothill and Little Wenlock.

Politics, the Army and the Church

Like other notable local families, members of the Forester family became involved in politics, both at local and national level, and some entered the professions – the law, the army and the church.

Politics

Looking first at an example when the family were at Watling Street and Dothill - John Forester; he who was allowed to wear his hat at the court of Henry VIII. John was a burgess of the Borough of Wenlock through his landowning at Huntington in Little Wenlock parish*(26), and he was one of Wenlock's two MPs between 1529 and 1536. This was of course a period of great political and religious change in this country – it was the time of the break with Rome – and John Forester was in the thick of it.

Another Forester, Francis III, the last member of his family to fully reside at the Old Hall on Watling Street, became Sheriff of Shropshire in 1652, again a time of great upheaval. Three years earlier, following the end of the Civil War, Charles I had been executed and the Commonwealth set up, with Oliver Cromwell soon to become Lord Protector.

Francis's son William inherited the Dothill estate in 1659 and later moved into Dothill House. As I said earlier, William took a keen interest in politics at a local and national level. He represented the Borough of Wenlock in Parliament from 1679 to 1715, with only one break between 1685 and 1688 - and that break is significant. During the later years of Charles II's reign, William Forester and others, who became known as Whigs, opposed the increasing absolutist and Catholic tendencies of the king and his brother and heir-apparent, James Duke of York, who in fact eventually openly declared his Catholicism. In 1683, William was suspected of implication in the so-called Rye House Plot. This was an attempt to abduct the king and his brother on their way back to London after a day at the races at Newmarket. The plot failed, and many of those involved were tried and either executed, imprisoned or exiled. In the nationwide search of the premises of possible sympathisers, the search at Dothill revealed 50 muskets and pike heads hidden in an oven and a large quantity of gunpowder buried on the estate. William Forester paid a heavy fine, allegedly helped by selling off valuable timber grown on the Wrekin.

When the Catholic James became king in 1685, William Forester supported the failed rebellion of Charles II's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, and was for a time imprisoned in the Tower of London, being suspected of 'dangerous and treasonable practices'. In 1687 he took himself off to the Hague in Holland, where he acted as an intermediary between the enemies of James II and William, Prince of Orange, who was the husband of James' Protestant daughter Mary.



1st Baron Forester

When James II fled from London in 1688 and William Prince of Orange was invited to England, William Forester accompanied him. The so-called 'Glorious Revolution' was completed the following year with the joint coronation of William III and Mary II. As a reward for his services, William Forester was knighted in the Order of the Bath and given a place in the Royal Household. This necessitated residing at Whitehall, where he subsequently maintained a 'lodging' throughout his official career.

William was an MP throughout this later period and a supporter of the court in Parliament during the reigns of William and Mary and Queen

Anne. But he stood down in 1715 following the Hanoverian succession, and died three years later. He had led a remarkable political life.

From the time of Sir William, members of the Forester family represented Wenlock for the next two centuries, until the borough was disfranchised – that is, lost its two MPs - in 1885. During that time, the Foresters controlled at least one of Wenlock's two parliamentary seats and on two occasions filled both seats. A long-serving MP was George, son of Brooke Forester. George, nicknamed the hunting squire, represented Wenlock from 1768 to 1790 and was active in Parliament particularly on behalf of the ironmasters of the borough – more of which later. In addition, he was bailiff, ie. mayor, of the borough – an annual appointment – on 15 occasions. An even longer parliamentary record was held by George's great nephew, George Cecil Weld-Forester, the second son of the 1st Baron, who was MP for Wenlock for 46 years, from 1828 to 1874. He became Father of the House of Commons in 1873 before moving to the Lords a year later when he succeeded his brother to the barony. During his political career he held minor posts in Tory administrations.

Military service

In addition to their political interests, some members of the family also undertook military service, at local and national level. At local level, for example, Brooke Forester joined with other local magistrates and farmers in raising the local militia to suppress food riots on the Coalfield in 1756; and John George, the eldest son of the 1st Baron, who himself became the 2nd Baron Forester - he served in the South Salopian Yeomanry Cavalry, being promoted from lieutenant to captain in May 1826. He took part with his troop when the Yeomanry were deployed to suppress the Chartist riots in Montgomeryshire in 1839, and as late as 1852 was in charge of the troop based at Wellington.

But several of the younger sons of the family were destined for a career in the army. Brooke Forester's youngest son, William, became Major of the 27th Regiment of Foot in 1763 and later died abroad of a fever; and the 1st Baron's younger brother, William, was Lieutenant in the 34th Regiment of Foot and died on service in the West Indies in 1794. In fact, four of the 1st Baron's six sons had army careers.

His second son, George Cecil, who was to become 3rd Baron Forester in 1874, had entered the Army on commission in 1824. He became Lieutenant-Colonel of the Royal Horse Guards in 1853, was promoted to staff rank as Major-General in 1863 and Lieutenant-General in 1871. He retired, aged 70, as full General in 1877, but saw no campaign service. These were no sinecures, but considering he was also MP for Wenlock for 46 years, one wonders how he managed to spread himself so widely..

A final example of a full military career in the family was that of a younger son of the 5th Baron Forester. This was Arthur Orlando Wolstan Cecil Weld-Forester, who was born in 1877. He joined the Grenadier Guards from the 3rd Shropshire Light Infantry in 1897, saw service in the Boer War and in India, and was promoted through the ranks. As Major in the 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards at the outbreak of the First World War, he was wounded in the 1st Battle of Ypres in October 1914 and died of his injuries in hospital in London.

The Church

In addition to their involvement with politics and the army, members of the family also had close ties with the Church. The head of the family was patron of a number of local churches within the area of the Forester estates. This gave them the right of advowson, ie. to appoint incumbents to the livings. This was not the case with Wellington, where the Eytons were patrons of the parish church until 1881; but it certainly applied to

Little Wenlock, Broseley, Benthall, Barrow and Linley. A memorial to the 2nd Baron is the east window of the new chancel in St Lawrence's Church, Little Wenlock, completed in 1875, a year after his death.

Some members of the family were also ordained. This often was the case with younger sons of aristocratic families. One example is the Rev. Townshend Forester, younger brother of the 1st Baron. Until his death in 1841, he held a number of livings at the same time. This was known as pluralism and was not unusual at that time. Townshend Forester was Perpetual Curate of Benthall from 1796, Rector of Broseley from 1799, Rector of Little Wenlock from 1818, as well as Vicar of Bedwardine in Worcestershire and Prebendary of Worcester Cathedral. The report of his death in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1841 comments critically on the income he got from the tithes, glebe and stipend of these posts. Clearly, as he would have been unable to fulfil all his priestly duties as well as being bailiff of Wenlock on eight occasions, a curate was appointed in each of his churches to carry out his duties.. The Rev Charles Henry Hartshorne, who later published *Salopia Antiqua*, was curate at Benthall from 1825 to 1828 and at Little Wenlock from 1828 to 1836.

Townshend's nephew, the Rev. Orlando Watkin, the youngest son of the 1st Baron, succeeded him as Rector of Broseley in 1841, and soon became a Prebendary of Hereford Cathedral. While at Broseley, he supervised the building of the new parish church. He left Broseley in 1859 and took up the living in Doveridge, Derbyshire and then Gedling near Nottingham eight years later. He became 4th Baron Forester on the death of his elder brother in 1886, but continued as Residentiary Canon of York Minster and Chancellor of the Diocese of York until his own death in 1894.

Economic interests

Much of the income from the Forester estates came from leasing land to tenant farmers. But the family also realised that the timber on their land and the mineral resources below ground could be exploited; and during the years of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries they leased land which was mined or quarried, had blast furnaces, limekilns or brickworks built on it, or wagonways driven through it. Furthermore, they themselves helped to promote industrial development.

Looking first at Forester land in Little Wenlock and Wellington, coal and limestone had been worked in Little Wenlock since the Middle Ages and when Francis Forester purchased the manor in 1623 he acquired the mineral rights of most of the area, and his successors got



Forester Coat of Arms

the remainder. These are two examples of leases of Forester land for mineral extraction. At Coalmoor and later New Works, the Darbys mined the clod coal needed for the coke they used in their furnace at Coalbrookdale, and in 1749 they were granted a wayleave to construct a wagonway to carry this coal. In a coloured engraving of 1758, the artist shows a wagon descending what is now Darby Road bringing clod coal from the Little Wenlock direction to be converted into coke. And a second example - the limestone pits and quarries and the burning of lime at the Hatch and Steeraway on the Little Wenlock/ Wellington parish

boundary were worked by way of leases from the Foresters from the late 17th century to the beginning of the 20th.

Again, at Willey, Foresters took an interest in the extraction and working of minerals on their estate. Their predecessor John Weld had taken over a blast furnace at Willey in 1631, and in 1757 Brooke Forester was a partner in the New Willey Company which built a new furnace; and this soon achieved a national reputation under the management of John Wilkinson, who became known as 'King of the Ironmasters'. Wayleaves were granted to build two wagonways to the Severn. In Parliament, Brooke's son George supported measures in favour of local ironmasters, and Cecil George, who later became the 3rd Baron Forester, raised the concerns of the local brick and tile industry. Following the decline of New Willey furnaces and Wilkinson's departure in 1804, the Foresters worked the forge there until the 1820s.

The management of their land with its tenant farmers was the major concern of the Foresters throughout the 19th century; and in 1922 Lord Forester and his son, who became the 7th Baron, formed the Willey Estates Company, owned by them, to run the estate. Beyond this country, the family also farmed land in southern Africa.

The Forester Legacy

The present Lord Forester, whose full title is Charles Richard George Weld-Forester, 9th Baron Forester of Willey, maintains the name George, like most of his predecessors since the time of the last Weld owner of Willey. Like them, he lives at Willey Hall, is involved in the company that runs the Willey estate, and is patron of the churches south of the Severn in the Gorge as well as St Lawrence, Little Wenlock. The Forester bugle/hunting horn is still part of the Wellington coat of arms. There is a Forester Arms public house in Broseley, although it is now better known by its restaurant name, 'The King and Tai'. (Incidentally, the Foresters Arms public houses at Horsehay and Madeley seem to be named after the Ancient Order of Foresters, a 19th century friendly society, and not after the family.) There are still streets named after the family – Forester Road in Broseley, Forester Grove in Wellington, and Forester Avenue in Much Wenlock. And the former Lady Forester Cottage Hospitals at Broseley and Much Wenlock are still in existence as community nursing or care homes.

So, the Foresters are still very much with us after some 800 years. Their coat of arms displays the combined Forester and Weld arms – the Forester hunting horns and the Weld crescents and cross, and also the Forester Talbot dog and Weld wyvern dragon, with the motto 'Semper eadem' – translated literally as 'always the same', or perhaps better as 'ever constant'.

Sources

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The Great Landowners of Great Britain & Ireland, by John Bateman (4th edn., 1883)

Information from Catherine, Lady Forester.

Memoirs of a First World War POW (May-Nov 1918)

by Janet Doody

(Taken from the unpublished manuscript of Edward Boden, Chapel Street, Broseley)

In late May 1918 the soldiers of the 9th Welsh Regiment were to take part in what became known as the German Spring Offensive. Initially billeted in a “nice unscarred village” (possibly St. Germain Le Ville), on the 29th May the Regiment, including Lance Corporal Edward Boden of Broseley, were given orders to make ready for the trenches.

The soldiers were conveyed by ‘bus and then marched across country to the edge of a small wood where they were ordered to dig in. Ahead



11 Chapel Lane, Broseley

and to the right of them small woodland copses limited their view, and to the left the land fell away into a valley. There followed a “peaceful morning” until it was realised that unseen German troops had passed along the valley floor and were probably now surrounding them.

Carefully and slowly the Allied forces numbering around 500 officers and men began to retire, eventually finding themselves in what appeared to be an abandoned quarry. Following a prolonged conversation, the officers came to the conclusion that there was no alternative but to surrender. The men were then instructed to remove



The War Bus

the bolts and ammunition from their rifles and “hurl them far and wide”, followed by their tin helmets, and a flag of surrender, in reality a “dirty white towel”, was raised. The German troops then began to appear, having quietly surrounded Lance Corporal Boden and his comrades, and around mid-day on a beautiful warm summer’s day they were escorted away as prisoners of war.

The march was halted a few hours later somewhere near Rheims and the officers were led away, whilst the rest of the men found themselves at a camp of wooden huts containing tiered bunks. Edward, a school teacher before the war, spoke reasonable French as did one of the German officers, and so he became the translator. The following day the prisoners’ first job was to erect wire fencing around the perimeter of the camp and then they were to march to the nearby village of Jonchery. It seemed the people of the village had all left very quickly, leaving most of their possessions; the prisoners were divided into gangs and ordered to loot the houses. This did enable them to at least look for food (which was to become an obsession for survival), although a number of the German guards were intent on finding wine! At the camp other work allocated to the prisoners included working in a field hospital for

recuperating German patients, building a bridge over the river Vesle and loading shells at the local railhead.

Some days later around 200 of the prisoners, including Edward, were moved to another camp near St. Gilles, and once again he acted as interpreter with the added responsibility of allocating working parties and cooking duties. Here the prisoners were made up of various Allied soldiers, not just the Welsh Regiments; many were very young, probably only having joined a few months before being captured. A number though had been in enemy hands for a considerable time and were in poor health as a result of the meagre daily rations, mostly potatoes and nettles with little or no meat; hardly surprising that procuring food whenever and wherever became the major occupation of the day.

The management of the camps, to Edward's mind, did not appear to be very efficient and were not organised according to the Geneva Convention. Although the prisoners all wrote letters home, which were eventually collected in the camp, it appeared they were never sent on. The registration of the prisoners was belatedly undertaken during October 1918, but the official International Red Cross registration books are only dated 11 November 1918, Armistice Day.

As the tide of the war began to turn, shelling of the camp and its



surroundings by the Allies became more frequent, often causing the inmates to “dive for shelter”; so it was no surprise to everyone that they were to be moved. After marching for a number of days, the prisoners arrived at Laon and were now, much to their surprise, to be transported by train, “a real train and not the usual horse vans”. As they passed through Belgium on their way to Germany, the prisoners noticed that from a

A.62681

BODEN, E.L/Cpl 29293. "B" Coy. Welsh Regt
Missing 30.5.18.Rep: Mr George Boden (fath)
11. Chapel Rd. Broseley. Sal
-op. England.

P.A. 36426 21.9.18. Négatif envoyé
Boden Edward Lt Col
9th Welsh Regt B. Coy 17.9.18
Bom 5.9.93 Broseley taken 30.5.18
Lt Colonel unscathed arrived from
front at Kassel. Communiqué for 11.10.18
29.10.18
P.A. 40322 11.11.18. Item transferred
from Kassel to Stuttgart.

bedroom window "a woman waved a Union Jack to us", which gave them "such a thrill".

After many days with numerous "stops and starts", these "Kriegsgefangenenlager" (English Prisoners of War) arrived at a camp near Kassel. Their accommodation was once again a large wooden hut fitted with wooden bunks but little bedding save "lousy blankets". At this camp were prisoners of many nationalities. Not surprisingly the English speakers were drawn to each other and whilst only a small number of the original Welsh Regiment remained together they had joined captives from other British county regiments, together with a few Americans. One young "Yank" revealed that he had an aunt living in Kassel and asked to be allowed a visit. The German officer



Prisoners cooking their canned food - Kassell Camp

remarked (in English) “Then you must be German”, to which the emphatic reply was “No! I am an American”. He was not allowed to visit or even to write.

At one point a supply of Red Cross parcels arrived and Edward was amongst those delegated to distribute them. As well as cigarettes, the boxes contained “manna from heaven”, in the form of packets of tea, Cadbury’s cocoa, canned milk and cheese, together with tinned Maconochie Dinners. These dinners, proclaimed the advertising, contained the “finest beef”, potatoes, haricot beans, carrots and onions; but one account described it as “sliced vegetables, chiefly turnips and carrots, in a deal of thin soup or gravy, when warmed it was edible, cold it was a man-killer”. There were some who said you needed a medal to eat a Maconochie, it was so vile; it also had a most unfortunate side effect, giving “the troops flatulence of a particularly offensive nature”.

By this stage of the conflict, the (few) local civilians and German guards were also suffering from food privations which, following the Red Cross delivery, led to some inventive “rackets” by the POWs. Drying the tea leaves after (often their second) use and re-sealing the bag, and wood ash placed in cocoa tins with a sprinkling of real powder on top, were all sold to the unwary!

After two months or so, a small number of prisoners including Edward were moved to Stuttgart. They boarded yet another train and once saw a huge sign for “Sunlight’s Lifebuoy” on the side of a Lever Brothers soap factory. This was not just a reminder of home but of the poor commodity called soap that the prisoners had to use, “incapable of procuring a lather (which) made shaving a very painful process”.

Life here though was a vast improvement on Kassel; although working on the railway, especially coaling the engines, was hard work using a four-man team of POWs supervised by guards. Amongst the overseers during this operation was one they all feared, detested and tried desperately to avoid, a woman who was “a large villainous looking slab of inhumanity, bearing more animosity towards her country’s enemy” than any German serviceman. The up side of this employment though was payment of 1 mark a day and often a bottle of lager with their dinner!

Sunday in camp was a free day, which allowed time for cricket (although cricket was over by the time Edward arrived) and football, with teams named after those from the British divisions. It also gave time for letter writing; and eventually news from home began to trickle through, only for Edward to discover from his mother that his brother Wilfred had been killed just five days after he himself had been captured.

Generally the progress of the war was successfully shielded from the POWs, but towards the end of October they heard that the Kaiser had abdicated and rumour began to spread that perhaps the end of hostilities was in sight. Gradually news of the Armistice trickled through the camp; a band was formed with all sorts of noisy instruments and a parade in fancy dress organised, followed by the question “Would we be home for Christmas?”

On the Sunday following Armistice, they were told they were leaving on “the most important and exciting adventure of our lives”. Most of their guards bade them farewell as they boarded open topped Daimler lorries for an extremely uncomfortable journey, as many trailers had only iron wheels, rubber being in short supply. They travelled through a cold night scattered with snowstorms before disembarking for breakfast at Kehl, and then taken to a nearby fortress surrounded by a moat.

After some four or five days the Germans seemed to disappear, leaving the now ex-POWs who spent no time at all in gathering their few belongings and setting off for home. Arriving in Strasbourg, they were taken to a local hospital and given a bed with duvets, “one drawback which none of us was able to overcome”, so that they longed for sheets



Coalbrookdale Station

and blankets. Finally, the men were able to board an overcrowded train for Paris, and here the operation became more organised with the YMCA mobile kitchens providing refreshment, where the cocoa was especially welcome.

At last under the care of the British Army, the men were taken to the Turkish baths and deloused; and with their old uniforms incinerated, they all felt thoroughly clean, well fed and looking forward to getting home. Following a de-briefing, they were finally able to cross the Channel for England and the best Christmas ever.

Whilst sitting around in Dover, a newspaper boy passed by the soldiers eating fish and chips; as one, they clubbed together and gave him some money to go fetch them all some. Those fish and chips were like a banquet! Next day they were all taken to the local railway station for an early start to their homes.

It was mid-afternoon when Edward arrived at Coalbrookdale railway station, followed by a lonely walk up the hill to Broseley. He received a warm but subdued welcome from his family when he finally reached home, as each remembered Ernest and Wilfred, the brothers who had been killed, and Harry, the youngest, who was still away, as well as the two others who had been wounded.

In 1921 Edward married Beatrice Lloyd, but it seems he did not continue his career in teaching. In 1939 they were living at 16 Heather Street, Smethwick, where Edward was employed as a clerk on the railway. He died in 1975.

