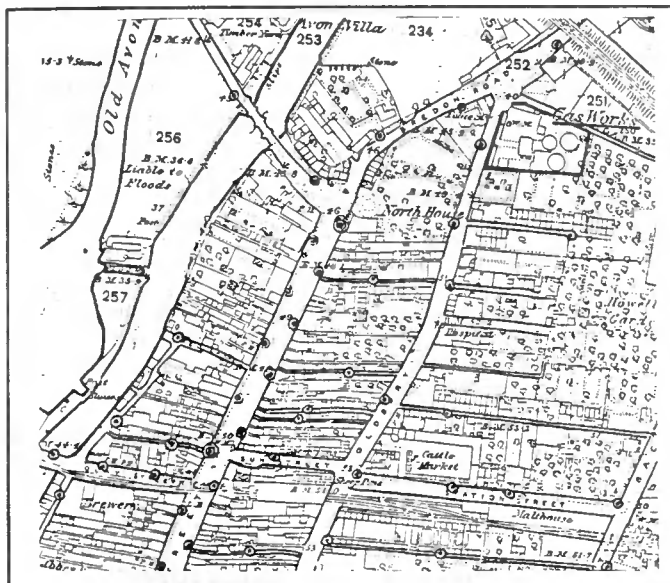


# Local History Bulletin

SPRING 1985 — No. 51



The Site of Tewkesbury Gas Works, Ordnance Survey Map 1884.G.R.O. TBR.18/5.

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## EDITORIAL

In this issue we are particularly grateful to Dr. Barrie Trinder and Mr John Milner, two speakers at the Annual Local History Conference, for converting their lectures into articles on the present state of research into the Upper Severn Navigation and on some early roads in South Gloucestershire.

The theme of street-lighting is new for Bulletin readers, while rating problems in Newent, described here by the longest serving Member of the Local History Committee, have a perennial ring.

Ann Wright's research into teacher assessment one hundred years ago provides an insight into the system of payment by results — and some of its results. In view of current thinking in some educational quarters, this article deserves a wider currency than just Gloucestershire readers!

BRYAN JERRARD.

### THE UPPER SEVERN NAVIGATION<sup>(1)</sup>

Most published accounts of the history of the upper Severn Navigation<sup>(2)</sup> are based on a very narrow range of original sources. Almost all rely heavily on George Perry's account of the river published in 1758,<sup>(3)</sup> and draw in support from a diversity of ephemeral sources. Some, like the various writings of John Randall, and Watkins Pitchford's useful pamphlet *The Port of Bridgenorth*<sup>(4)</sup> employed the reminiscences of those who had been active in the trade before oral history was fashionable. Writing about the history of the Upper Severn is fraught with difficulties, since its operation above Stourport was never subjected to any form of bureaucratic control, and the kinds of transactions immaculately recorded by many canal and railway companies were doubtless transmitted verbally on the Severn. Much research has been in progress over the last decade or so, and as its results begin to emerge this is an appropriate moment to review some of the questions which need to be asked about the river.

A large part of the new work has been nothing more than the application of systematic methods to sources which have long been well

known. There have been no sudden discoveries of hitherto unrevealed archival treasures. Newspapers contain many items, inconsequential in themselves, but which taken together add considerably to our knowledge. Advertisements, minor court cases, and reports on such events as floods and sightings of supposed monsters, can help to answer many questions. Census enumerators' returns also have much to reveal about the closing decades of the navigation's history. The virtual disappearance of barge-men from the Shrewsbury returns in the 1840's — there were 18 in the town in 1841 and only two in 1851 — strongly suggests that the trade upstream from the Ironbridge Gorge declined to an insignificant level during that decade. Wills and probate inventories are valuable sources for the study of river traders as of other occupation groups in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The inventories of most of the major riverside parishes in Shropshire and those for Bewdley have now been transcribed, and the publication of those for the Ironbridge Gorge and Bridgenorth is in prospect within the next few years.<sup>(5)</sup> The Port Books of Gloucester and Bristol probably have the greatest potential for enlarging our knowledge of the river's operation. A research project based at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, with which the Ironbridge Gorge Museum is closely associated, is employing a computer to make accessible the vast quantity of data in the port books. The project is already proving usefully informative about the trade of the upper river, and its potential for the study of the lower and middle stretches is, of course, equally great. Many business and estate records, and occasional cases recorded in the records of Chancery and other courts can throw light on the river, and there is certainly more to be gained from the patient accumulation of data from printed ephemera, poll books and directories. Archaeologists can contribute to the history of the river. In Shropshire they have explained the relationship of fish weirs to the navigation, and have directed attention to the use of the Severn's tributary, the Tern.<sup>(6)</sup> Many sources can thus contribute to our knowledge, but as in other spheres of historical study, understanding comes through the use of imagination in the posing of questions and the shaping of hypotheses and not just by the accumulation of facts.

A model of the chronological development of the river navigation is required which can be modified in the light of new information which is emerging. The Severn was used by barges in the middle ages, and there was a substantial growth in traffic during the reign of Elizabeth I, stimulated by the development of coal mining in the Ironbridge Gorge.<sup>(7)</sup> By the time of the Restoration, if not earlier, a basic pattern of activity had been established which seems to have persisted with only marginal changes for two centuries. Attempts to canalise the upper river in the 1780's failed to gain parliamentary support, and were never seriously revived, although the construction of towpaths between 1796 and 1810 enabled horses to replace gangs of men as the chief means of upstream haulage. The opening of some canals, the Staffordshire & Worcestershire in 1772, the Thames & Severn in 1789 and the Shropshire in 1793 brought increased business to the Severn, but others, the Montgomeryshire and the Birmingham & Liverpool Junction, drew traffic away. Competition from canals, roads and ultimately railways increased in the nineteenth century, and while the improvement of the Severn below Stourport in the 1840's gave that section of the river more than a century of further commercial prosperity, the use of the Shropshire portion steadily

declined, although pleasure boating of various kinds increased and occasional navigation between the Ironbridge Gorge and the county town was virtually at an end a decade later, and by tradition the last commercial barge to leave the Gorge sank after hitting one of the piers of Bridgenorth bridge in 1895.<sup>(8)</sup>

Many questions remain to be answered about the practical operation of the river. Probate inventories show that eighteenth century bargemen made precise distinctions between different types of craft, trows, barges, frigates, flats and wherries. It is no longer possible to explain all of these distinctions. To what extent the river navigation was seasonal also requires examination. The port books are a valuable guide to the times when vessels were sailing from the upper Severn through Gloucester, but it is probably that smaller craft could undertake shorter voyages at times when the larger boats capable of sailing the lower river had to remain at their wharves. The development of navigation in the Severn tributaries also requires examination. The Coalbrookdale Company records have provided evidence about the Avon and the Wye, and less predictably, about the Tern.<sup>(9)</sup> Newspaper references reveal a little information about the Vyrnwy. Some additional knowledge to that provided by the survival of flash locks is required to make comprehensible the use of the Dick Brook.<sup>(10)</sup> The navigation would be better understood if more was known of how boats were chartered. Were there long term contracts between masters and merchants, or between industrial concerns and owners? How did the bow haulers operate? Did they pull a vessel all the way upstream, say from Gloucester to Shrewsbury, or did each team have a beat which comprised a day's journey, after which they returned home in a small craft. An accident near Upton to a party of bow haulers sailing downstream at night in a small vessel suggests the latter, but it is the only evidence on the subject.

As on many transport systems the carriage of bulk cargoes was the most important activity on the upper Severn and at the same time the most difficult to investigate. Estate and company records from the Ironbridge Gorge show that coal was always taken on credit by barge-owners from the coalmasters' wharves, and that the owners concerned in this trade were perpetually in debt. It is likely that such owners comprised the majority of bargemen on the upper river, that their boats were small ones incapable of venturing below Gloucester, and, as the probate evidence suggests, they were mostly very poor. The pattern of coal traffic also deserves investigation. The port books show that Shropshire coal was being taken to Bristol, a fact confirmed by at least one probate inventory, and also that coal was being carried upstream through Gloucester in Shropshire boats. The Coalbrookdale accounts suggest that throughout the eighteenth century most of that company's products were carried by barge owners who operated to particular destinations for long periods. The port books have already revealed important new information about the operations of the first Abraham Darby at Coalbrookdale after 1710, a period for which there are no works accounts, showing a steady increase in the volume of iron pots passing downstream, and showing that he was also making brass pots, until his equipment was sent downstream through Gloucester in 1714. The port books, together with what has been learned about the material culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through probate inventories, are transforming our understanding of the merchandise trade and are posing

hosts of intriguing questions about the economic and social life of the period. Bottled beer in considerable quantities was passing both upstream and downstream through Gloucester. The carriage of beeswax was on a quite remarkable scale. Linen cloth from Shropshire was carried downstream on an unexpectedly large scale.

Passenger traffic also requires further investigation. Published sources show that passenger wherries between Shrewsbury and Worcester were well-established in the 1750's and newspaper evidence shows that by the 1770's there was a weekly boat leaving Shrewsbury each Monday morning at 6 a.m. and reaching Gloucester in the afternoon of the following day. The service was still operating in 1788 when passengers spotted a monster in the river near Diglis, but ceased not long afterwards. Its revival, along American lines with larger, more comfortable vessels, was urged in 1811.

Research should also throw more light on the bargeowning communities along the river. It appears from Perry and other sources that from the seventeenth century until the nineteenth there was probably but little variation in the general pattern, that the large towns, Shrewsbury, Bewdley, Worcester and Gloucester, had relatively small numbers of fairly wealthy owners, and there were only a few owners in the smaller riverside parishes, but great concentrations in the Ironbridge and in Bridgnorth, the Panama and Liberia of the navigation. The use of inventories and census evidence will enable the precise nature of such communities to be established.

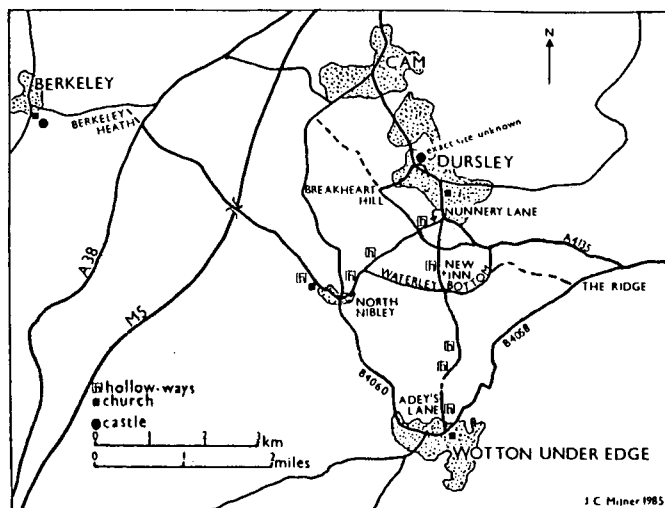
Finally, we need to know about the individuals involved in the river trade. The accumulation of evidence will enable biographies to be constructed which will provide new insights. We are already able to trace much of the career of Eustace Beard, an owner whose cast-iron tomb can be seen in Benthall churchyard.<sup>(1)</sup> We know when he started carrying on the river, the commodities he carried for the Coalbrookdale Company, the high opinion of him held by that company's partners in the 1730's and the marriages into other bargeowning families made by his children. We are on the verge of exciting discoveries about the navigation, but such discoveries need to be expressed in terms of the lives of individuals as well as patterns of trade.

BARRIE TRINDER.

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## SOME EARLY ROADS IN SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE



**Hollow-ways in the Berkeley — Dursley Area**

Apart from those built during and since the era of turnpike trusts, roads can not be dated.<sup>(1)</sup> Many of our roads and tracks are probably of great antiquity but we can not say who created them or when. However, we can comment, with more chance of being accurate, on the periods at which particular roads or networks experienced economic significance. After all, roads connect places of economic importance and they can be adapted, in terms of alignment and gradients, to the type of traffic they carry. Thus the roads favoured by horsemen, pack trains and pedlars can be both direct and, in places, very steep without creating problems for travellers. When wheeled vehicles became predominant those steep roads were either relegated to minor or local roles or they were re-engineered to produce gentler gradients leaving abandoned sections to grass over. In modern times, the making of cuttings, embankments and lay-bys on improved and straightened trunk roads is an expression of this process in the motor age. When existing roads are extremely steep, direct, narrow and deeply hollowed it is reasonable to conclude that their real significance pre-dates universal wagon and carriage traffic. Equally, while some settlements undoubtedly develop on roads, or show growth towards new or diverted ones, it seems reasonable to suppose that important phases in the economic life of particular roads can hardly pre-date the existence of the communities they link.

South Gloucestershire and North Avon contain a number of market towns, given charters during the Middle Ages, which were once important but which have since declined in the hierarchy of settlements. These old market towns are linked by roads some of which, at least, are quite clearly part of a network different to that favoured by today's drivers. Apart from the Gough, or Bodeian, Map of the 14th Century, early documentary evidence of the existence of particular roads is slight. Some

ideas can be derived from the existence of political or manorial relationships such as those between the various Berkeley manor and castles. The dates of borough and market charters can, perhaps, help us to define periods at which particular nodes and strands in the communications network acquired significance. Such indirect evidence can point to periods of importance though it does not prove that the roads in question did not exist long before the charter dates. Certainly many roads have survived long after the relative decline of the markets they joined.

There are many Gloucestershire and Avon examples of towns which received charters during the great 11th to 14th century period of urban progress. It is hardly surprising to find Berkeley and Thornbury receiving charters as early as c.1070. Dursley, mentioned as being part of the Berkeley estates as early as 1086, received a charter c.1175 close to the date when a castle was built there.<sup>(3)</sup> Tetbury's charter dates from c.1200 and that of Wotton-under-Edge from c.1220. The charter for Chipping Sodbury was confirmed in 1227. Hawkesbury received one in 1250, Wickwar in 1285, Tortworth in 1304 and Leonard Stanley c.1315. Unlucky Newport received its market privilege in 1348, one year before the Black Death swept up the Vale of Berkeley. Winterbourne's charter dates from as late as 1393.<sup>(4)</sup> Bristol and Gloucester were, of course, the great commercial poles. Stroud did not enter the picture.

Amongst these medieval towns it is reasonable to attempt an identification of roads of contemporary significance. The triangle formed by Berkeley, Wotton-under-Edge and Dursley (all Berkeley manors) seems a particularly fruitful area because within it lies the long and deeply indented Waterley Bottom east of North Nibley. This valley is rich in steep, deeply incised hollow ways that appear anomalous in modern terms.

From Berkeley itself, across Berkeley Heath, a very direct road can be traced, climbing up a distinct hollow-way to North Nibley appropriately aligned west to east along "The Street." This road continues past an intersection with the "New Road" to Stinchcombe and Cam but soon splits. The northern fork passes Forthay to Breakheart Hill up which it ascends very steeply to the top by the park wall. A hollow-way drops down to Nunnery Lane at the Woodmancote and Uley end of Dursley, slightly to the west another very steep descent leads down to the heart of Dursley, close to the assumed site of the castle, on the edge of the market area. The other fork from North Nibley leads up the southern flank of the Waterley Bottom, across the interfluvium (where a number of old tracks can be seen across a field in spite of recent engineering works) and steeply down Adey's Lane to the heart of early Wotton-under-Edge close by the church. These roads form very direct ways to Dursley and Wotton, crossing the field of the Battle of Nibley Green on the route. For Wotton people going to Dursley an almost straight road exists by way of Adey's Lane, down into Waterley Bottom, up another hollow-way behind the New Inn and by another steep descent to join Nunnery Lane at its foot. The distance involved is three miles from church to church, in contrast to the six miles along the B4060 scarp foot road through Stinchcombe and Cam. The B4058 and A4135 motorist's way to Dursley is five miles and more in length. For the walker or rider, the advantage of the old hollow-ways are self evident.

Other ways out of Waterley Bottom from the old road from Berkeley are by Whiteway in the Uley direction and to the Ridge, on the B4058 and then past Kingscote very directly to the Berkeley's castle at Beverstone. In fact the apparent tangle of sunken lanes crossing a deep valley

and steep flanked ridges makes real sense in terms of directness and distance in a long gone age.

A late reference to an important route across Breakheart Hill a few decades before the start of the turnpike era of road history is to be found in John Ogilby's great road atlas "Britannia,"<sup>(5)</sup> published in 1675 on page 117 of which commences his description of the road between Bristol and Worcester through Rangeworthy, past Tortworth Park on its way to Dursley and from thence through Gloucester.

*After passing Tortworth Park Ogilby says of the road:—*

"Hence a very irregular Road through a large Wood Part of Micklewood Chase and by some dispersed Houses, conveys you at 20 miles to Part of Tortworth, and 2 Furlongs further to an Ascent of above a Mile in Height on which Ascent you pass through a Village call'd Stinchcombe Bottem; then by Nibley Park on the Right and the Beacon on the Left through a Wood, and descending an Hill you enter Dursley at 22'1 an indifferent large Town, beautify'd by a large Church, in the Church-yard arises a Spring call'd New Elm, that drives a Mill within half a Furlong:"

This apparently absurd approach to Dursley is, in fact direct and forms just another strand in the network crossing the Breakheart ridge. It can still be traced on foot although such routes must have lost favour as soon as hooves gave way to wheels. The inclusion of this road to Dursley in the map and account in "Britannia" is really an hark back to a long era of travel just drawing to a close. When carriages came into vogue there was no gain in time by attempting to follow such a route.

Several unanswered questions remain. Do these hollow-ways predate the market charters of places on which they focus? if so, did the communities grow up at existing route junctions of an antiquity greater than the earliest historical references to the towns? if not, and the hollow-ways are roughly contemporary with the trade between these markets, how did they come to be so deeply incised? The traditional explanation that traffic coupled with rainwash did the work seems inadequate even on slopes of clay and Cotteswold Sand. Where the hollow-ways are in limestone this explanation seems even less plausible within the time span of seven hundred years. When such roads became mired and deeply sunken why were not roughly parallel ones established as in many other places where alternative ways can still be seen as dips in the ground? Have we here, in the Dursley—Wotton area a fossilised transport network of an antiquity far greater than that of the towns as recorded in historical record?

JOHN MILNER

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## THE LIGHTING OF TEWKESBURY'S STREETS

Street lighting in modern times has always been associated with the idea of a well-ordered town. This brief synopsis, based on research sponsored by the University of Bristol Extra Mural Department's evening class at the County Record Office, illustrates the problems of organising adequate lighting until very recent times.

In 1608 a Tewkesbury bye-law ordered the more prosperous and influential members of the community to hang out a lantern every night from the eve of All Saints Day (31 October) until the morning after Candlemas Day (3 February) 'except at the time of the moon shining'.<sup>(1)</sup> This practised economy of the lamps remaining unlit around the time of the full moon lasted well into the nineteenth century.

It was not until Tewkesbury was granted a Local Improvement Act in 1786<sup>(2)</sup> that the responsibility for street lighting passed wholly to the local authorities. However, street lighting was not introduced into the town until 1791. The Street Commissioners put into practice a plan devised by one of their own members, the Reverend William Smith, for eighty oil lamps set thirty yards apart along the three main streets.

John Stephens, a local licensee, was employed to light the lamps at a penny per lamp per night. He continued as lamplighter for the next five years, but was reminded on 9 October, 1795 'that should he fail in the due performance of this agreement' he would be discharged from the post. There is no record of his dismissal, but for the following three winters the town lamps were lit by an 'outside contractor' William Coudery, an oil merchant of Cripple Gate, London. This use of an 'outside contractor' was short lived, the Commissioners having reverted to their original methods of lighting by 1804.

The Street Commissioners purchased their lamp oil from local dealers, making every effort to take equal amounts from those who submitted tenders of equal value. On only two occasions do the records indicate the purchase of a specific oil, 'pale seal oil that burns well.'<sup>(3)</sup>

Gas street lighting was first considered in 1827, but a failure to agree terms with a Mr Hill of Worcester, led to the abandonment of the idea. The question of gas lighting was raised again in 1832.<sup>(4)</sup> Within a month terms had been agreed with William Morely Stears, a gas engineer of Leeds, for the formation of the Tewkesbury Gas Company. Capital for the purchase of land at the top of Oldbury and for the construction of the gas works was raised by the issue of four hundred £10 shares.<sup>(5)</sup> By the 21 January, 1833 work was sufficiently advanced to enable the greater part of the town to be lit by gas.<sup>(6)</sup>

The initial lighting contract was due to expire on the thirty first of December, 1853, after a period of twenty one years. In February of that year the Local Board of Health, who were now responsible for street lighting, commenced discussion with the Gas Company for a contract of a much shorter duration. Although terms had been agreed by the 14 March, a deputation of five persons who had recently attended a meeting about gas lighting at the Swann Inn, succeeded in persuading the Board to defer signing the final contract. The Gas Company immediately withdrew their offer, the managers stating that 'it is quite unprecedented that a decision as to the acceptance or rejection of a tender first specially called for and after its contents had been made known, exposed to public competition without an opponent bidding, should further be postponed

at the request of parties who merely had in contemplation the formation of a rival company'.<sup>(7)</sup> The failure to resolve this dispute by the end of the year resulted in the town being deprived of street lighting for several nights during January.

The local paper, the **Tewkesbury Monthly Record**, was critical of the delay in reaching an agreement. 'After a whole years consideration of the question, public meetings, deputations to and from, and no end of correspondence with the Company, these luminous Gentlemen, the Guardians of the town, the Conservators of public health and preservers of the Borough's wealth, finished their labours for the year by leaving the town in utter darkness.'<sup>(8)</sup> The Minute Book of the Tewkesbury Local Board of Health records that an agreement was eventually reached on the 1 February for a contract of one year's duration.

On 6 January, 1885 the Gas Company submitted new proposals for lighting the town, insisting on a term of not less than three years. This three year term proved unacceptable to the Local Board of Health. Once more the town was deprived of gas street lighting, although a system of temporary lighting was set up in March,<sup>(9)</sup> and continued in use until the dispute was settled in September. The twenty temporary 'naptha' lamps were considered a poor substitute for the gas lamps, 'what aid do the watchers receive from a lamp which when lighted does not show the faces of the mischievous youths trying to shake it down.'

The **Tewkesbury Weekly Record** was critical of those in authority and on 11 August made this comment 'Soon the necessary saving by the use of naptha will be effected and we shall go back to gas. Could we not elect these Gentlemen who saved so much by the non-consuming method, Guardians of the Poor and thus enable them to carry out their schemes of economy on a grand scale by doing away with the use of bread in the Workhouse till they had saved enough to bury the inmates.'<sup>(10)</sup>

The dispute was finally settled on the 28 September, 1885 and with this settlement came a new and more realistic approach to negotiations.

Electric street lighting was first brought to the attention of the Authorities in 1888.<sup>(11)</sup> Little enthusiasm was shown for the idea until 1899, when the Tewkesbury Urban Council instructed Christy Brothers of London to produce an estimate of the cost of constructing and operating an electricity generating station.<sup>(12)</sup>

Considerable interest was shown at this time by those wishing to supply the town with electricity. Provisional Orders were sought by several companies, including the Tewkesbury Gas Company. These applications proved unsuccessful, the Board of Trade granting the Tewkesbury Urban Council such an order in 1904.<sup>(13)</sup> This order was transferred in 1908 to John Parker, a civil engineer and founder of the Tewkesbury Electric Light Company in St. Mary's Lane.<sup>(14)</sup>

By 1917 the Electric Light Company had laid sufficient cables within the town to enable them to tender for the town lighting contract. The Urban Council proceeded with some caution, allowing as an experiment one electric lamp suspended above Church Street. Such was the success of this first electric lamp that by 1922 eleven more such lamps had been erected above the three main streets, the displaced gas lamps being used elsewhere in the town.

The Gas Company did not appear to respond to the challenge from electricity. In November, 1922 a lighting committee reported that many of the gas lamps were out of order through lack of maintenance and that

several of the new unused lamps were in a dirty and delapidated state and should be removed from the streets.<sup>(15)</sup>

In 1946 the Shropshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire Electric Power Company, which had taken over the Tewkesbury Electric Light Company, won a major contract for lighting Priors Park, a Council owned housing estate on the outskirts of the town. Despite the extra cost, the aesthetic value of concrete lamp standards was preferred to those of cast iron, although the introduction of 'sodium lamps' was deferred in view of the further considerable expense.<sup>(16)</sup>

Gas and electric street lighting continued in the town up to and beyond the time of nationalisation in 1948, electricity eventually replacing gas as the preferred means of lighting the streets.

R. J. LYON-SMITH.

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#### RATING PROBLEMS IN NEWENT

When the parish was the main unit of local government rates were levied according to local needs, both on a regular basis and for specific purposes. The minutes of Newent Vestry meetings between 1768 and 1820 provide examples of these needs, of the difficulties experienced in raising the money and in regulating its expenditure, and of complaints from ratepayers.

The Vestry resolved in November 1770 'that the Almshouses in the said Parish shall be forthwith repaired . . . and that the same be raised by a Sixpenny Pound Rate by the Overseers of the poor.'

In April 1781 it was resolved that the master of the Workhouse 'shall have seven sixpenny books as they are collected all over the Parish of Newent for to maintain and clothe all the poor of the said Parish.'

The winter of 1799 and 1800 was particularly hard and a Soup Shop was established for the 'relief of the poor during the present inclement

Season.' Although there was some money raised by private subscription it was 'unanimously resolved that a Sixpenny Rate (2½p) be granted for the relief of the Poor.'

It appears that sixpence in the pound, based on the rateable value of the property, was the normal rate used for the calculation of money due for the Church Rate, Highway Rate and Poor Rate. It was the last which placed the heaviest burden on the ratepayers and several rates a year could be levied for this, whenever more money was needed.

In 1773 it was agreed that a 'sixpenny book be collected through the Parish for to pay off the old debts that are properly sworn to.' At a very full meeting of the parishioners, in April 1784, a committee of ten persons was appointed to 'examine and form a plan for reducing the expenses of the Parish which have of late years been increasing at so rapid a rate as to threaten the most alarming and serious consequences to the Payers.'

The Committee suggested that relief granted to the poor should be more strictly controlled; that expenses allowed to Parish Officers should be reduced; and that a committee should be appointed to manage the affairs of the Parish for the coming year, reporting to the Parish every three months.

The Vestry heard in April 1811 that the Guardian of the Poor had received in rates for the year £1121 5s 11½d. (£1121.29). He had already spent £1159 9s.11d. (£1159.49) and with 'bills and pay to the Poor for two weeks to be brought into account,' and not more than £10 in rates still due to be received it appeared he would need 'upwards of £200' to cover his expenses. The answer was to levy an additional rate of Sixpence to provide for these deficiencies.

The Guardian's habit of not paying bills until the end of the year caused the Poor Accounts to be in such a muddle in 1817 that it was agreed that half the rate received should be used to pay off the old bills until all were discharged, leaving half for current expenses. In future all the bills were to be audited and settled once a month.

Additional rates were probably levied in 1817 and 1818 to balance the accounts but the highest number was recorded in 1819. The actual figure for the year are recorded in the minutes Book.

Nine rates at 6d. in the Pound	£1587 3s 0d.	(£1587.15).
Maintenance of Poor	£1436 12s 2d.	(1436.61).
Paupers employed on Highways	£52 2s 3d.	(£52.11 ½).
Woman who taught children to head pins.	£10 1s 0d.	(£10.05).

There is no record in the earliest Minute Book available of the method used of assessing properties for rateable values but in April 1801 the Vestry agreed to quash the present Poor's levy and ordered that a survey and valuation of the Parish be made. By 1816 greater demands than ever were being made to relieve the distress of the poor as soldiers and sailors returning from the Napoleonic Wars were unable to find employment.

The new Poor Rate assesment being made in 1816 was the cause of the most notable dispute over rates. John Norse, of Southern, gave the Vestry notice that he was going to appeal against his assesment at the Quarter Sessions.

He maintained that others were assessed "not properly in the proportion to me," for he was rated higher than the yearly rents of his estates

and others were not rated to their yearly rents. A committee was immediately appointed to look into the matter but not to help Mr Norse. Their instructions were 'not to lower any charge . . . but to raise those that appeared to be under rated.' Three very poorly attended meetings were held at which additions were made to the rateable values. These were later said to be 'at random and error to want of knowing the quantity of Acres of these premises they altered.' On the 27 August, when the new rate book had been produced, two committee members were leaving the room when Mr James Cummins came in and said that if the charge on his estate of Casswells were not put back from £6 10s 0d. (£6.50) to the original amount of £5 10s 0d. (£5.50) he would pay no poor rate at all! The other two noted in the minute book "We find ourselves somewhat indignant at being deserted by our offices and propose that the rate above mentioned shall be produced at a public meeting . . . allowing appeals to those who think themselves aggrieved."

Unfortunately there is no record of this public meeting so we do not know how the story ended.

Neither do we know if the Vestry found an answer to a problem that still worries us nearly 200 years later.

In 1793 a committee was appointed to make a new poor rate on the grounds that the present one was 'partial and unequal.' The committee adjourned to the Bull 'to make the Church Rate and the Poor Rate in a just and equitable and convenient manner.'

FRANCES PENNEY.

Newent Vestry Minutes Book. C.R.O. p225, VE 2/1

## TEACHER ASSESSMENT IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE c.1860 —1880

The relationship between national educational policy and the practical realities of local provision is a subject of lively contemporary debate. In fact, however, this debate and one of its most controversial themes (teacher assessment) is not new. The Revised Code (1862), which was really a statement about educational constraint derived from economic realities, dictated the limited subject framework of the elementary school curricula for over twenty years by emphasising payment by results; the teachers struggled for these results and the Inspector's task was to assess the children's responses and the teacher's competence. No wonder that individual Inspectors were greatly feared, especially as their advice was usually prescriptive and given to teachers struggling to achieve national standards in widely differing circumstances. These circumstances did not weigh in the balance when judgements about competence were being made and salaries computed. The teachers taught the basic skills as instructed and some teachers must have reflected bitterly that the men who criticised their efforts had, for the majority, never taught in their lives. Victorian school Inspectors were educated men of good social standing, but teaching experience as such was never a pre-requisite for appointment as a member of Her Majesty's Inspectorate. It is clear that those who were assessing the teachers may have been greatly feared, but professionally their comments did little to improve practice. The years 1860—1880 provide a variety of insights into the realities of teacher assessment in Victorian times, but little evidence is forthcoming about teacher improvement.

What evidence there is about teacher assessment during this period is thought-provoking and relevant, part of that 'continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past.'<sup>(1)</sup> As required by law, the handwritten evidence by teachers and Inspectors is available for review in many Gloucestershire school Log Books.<sup>(2)</sup> These Log Books reveal two realities and show how the teachers' subjective worlds are complemented by the Inspectors' objective comments. What is rarely clear is how or if ever these two levels of experience came together: the general impression is of a centrally imposed set of standards which individual teachers matched or not as circumstances or their own talents decreed. From 1862 onwards the policy of payment by results ruled teachers' everyday lives, but the variety of schooling and teaching revealed by the Log Book entries does little to suggest a direct correlation between Inspectors' comments and teachers' responses; there is no doubt that teachers were assessed, together with their pupils, on Inspectors' annual visits, but there is little evidence to show that the effect of the Inspectors' comments was anything more than transitory. Competitive evidence from several Gloucestershire schools suggests that individual teachers (good and bad) created the learning atmosphere in any school and the situation of the school did seem to have some effect upon the kinds of teachers employed in it. The contrast between the amenities of town and country life was marked and transport limited. Teachers working in small country schools were isolated from professional contacts and tended to be in awe of the local clergy and gentry who often took an interest in the parish school. At least one small school in Gloucestershire, Cromhall, appeared to have staffing problems during the twenty or so years of the Revised Code's implementation.

Cromhall School is still in use today though it is now located in Avon not Gloucestershire. The building retains the Biblical text inscribed near the entrance:—

'Train up a child in the way he should go,  
And when he is old he will not depart from it.'

The Log Book for the period 1860—1880 records a variety of interesting details about the life of the school and the attitudes of a number of more or less competent teachers who did not stay long or appear to be particularly interested. Mary Coram, for example, was appointed to Cromhall School in 1861 with 72 children on the register. Her Log Book entries are often uninspired — 'Nothing to record' and 'Ordinary progress.' An Inspector's comment on her is forthright — 'She should be more animated and energetic in her teaching' (1862). There is frequent reference in the Log Book to achievement in Needlework,<sup>(3)</sup> but progress in Reading and Arithmetic does not feature largely until the 1870's when the grant earned on 3 April, 1872 is recorded as £55 10s. Miss Sarah Fletcher and her mother took over the school in the mid seventies when there were 59 children registered. The Inspector commended Mrs Fletcher's motherly manner in teaching the infants, but wished to see "better reading and more knowledge of number as well as some systematic oral teaching.' It appears that Miss Fletcher was a trained teacher and her mother the untrained assistant. Whatever Mrs Fletcher's professional skills the atmosphere of the school is perfectly captured by the recorded information that Mrs Fletcher made cakes for everyone after the Inspector's visit. As the years went on improvements

were made to the Cromhall building; a gallery was added to the school-room in the 1880's; cards were provided for oral teaching and order improved but not attainment. In 1882 the Inspector thought that 'A want of life and briskness is at the bottom of much of the failure in the school.' Miss Smith and Miss Lacey who followed Miss Fletcher were even less successful:

'A well-considered and Systematized course of simple lessons may well be expected in this school where two adult teachers are employed.'

The Inspector's irritation is evident and matters at Cromhall improved only in 1885 when Miss Hill from Christ Church Infants' School, Cheltenham arrived and 'bright and cheerful order prevailed.' Careful notes were kept of every Standard's progress in Arithmetic and an Object Lesson for infants is laid out in detail in the Log Book. By this time the straitjacket of the Revised Code was being removed, teacher-training had improved and a better relationship was developing between the Inspectors and the teachers.

Moreton-in-Marsh provides a good contrast to Cromhall. Its situation in the northern part of the county near the Oxfordshire border gave it a larger population than Cromhall and somewhat easier access to other towns. Morton-in-Marsh had four schools from 1860 onwards and three Log Books remain: one from the infants' school another from the boys' National School and a third from the British School. The infants' and Boys' schools were watched over by Lord Redesdale; the British School's continuing existence was ensured by following up truants with vigour. Moreton-in-Marsh's comparative affluence seems to have encouraged an appreciation of schooling and a willingness to experiment with new methods. For example the British School's Log Book entry (10/7/63): ' . . . made new timetable for infant school to try the effect of changes every half hour.' The Infants' School Log Book provides particularly interesting information about what teachers did and how they did it. Besides singing and marching the girls did patchwork when the boys wrote on their slates; on other occasions half the children formed a circle and read to the teacher while the other half read to the monitor using cards (12/4/65). The well organised and systematic teaching offered at Moreton pleased the Inspectors though the realities of school life contrast with the apparent good order; Catherine Morris commented in November 1868:—

'She (CM) thought the children looked miserable and poorly . . . can't find out whether the children know anything or not . . . Find the children can repeat some nice portions of Scripture . . . (A child called Joseph behaved badly and his mother complained) . . . Mistress obliged to say she could not undertake to teach him at all.'

What were called Object Lessons increased generally after 1870, but were first mentioned at Moreton Infants' School on November 5, 1863, when the three younger classes learned about Cotton. Over fifteen years later the Inspector at the same school commended a collective (group) lesson on form and colour and two years after this (1881) Emily Smith was giving Object Lessons on everything from Sugar to Flying Fish.<sup>(4)</sup> The comparative evidence which emerges from the Moreton Infants' School Log Book and the one belonging to Cromhall suggests that the

Inspectors' comments on both schools served merely to confirm the status quo. Assessment, it seems, made little difference to work in progress; matters did not improve at Cromhall and may well have been made worse by the inevitably depressing comments about teachers who were in no position to improve by their own efforts alone. What does seem to be significant, however, is the attitude of the community to teachers. Several of the Morton references are to parties and social events for the schools and their supporters. The Cromhall children in the 1860's are recorded as enjoying their annual tea at the Rectory, but the teachers seem to have been acutely aware of their inferior social status. Perhaps the narrowness of the social world at Cromhall served to emphasise professional inadequacies.

Professional self-assessment by Victorian teachers usually centred on the absolute necessity of keeping school attendance up; this necessity was dictated by financial not educational reasons. Similarly the payment by results system made the lives of most teachers miserable when they could do nothing about the factors (poor health, bad facilities, unco-operative parents) which hindered the children's progress and attainment. The Newcastle Commission<sup>(5)</sup> (1861) which had heralded the Revised Code had recorded a variety of comments from parents about teachers:—

'I don't like schoolmaster because he's a teetotaller.'

'I hate all dissenters.'

These attitudes, together with the 'mechanical contrivances' adopted by teachers to get children through the annual Inspection, combined to make teachers seem, both to themselves and others, the hacks of a heartless system. Only when that system was completely wrecked (as predicted by Sir James Kaye-Shuttleworth in 1866<sup>(6)</sup>) did teachers begin to acquire a sense of self-esteem and self-respect. The present debate about teacher assessment and its additional concern for competence and professionalism is a reflection of the Victorian theme of value for money; while there is nothing inherently wrong in that, the evidence from the period 1860—1880 does not suggest that there was a marked improvement in teachers' skills or children's attainment for all the yearly Inspections. What is abundantly clear is that an increased degree of central pressure led to greatly heightened anxiety among the teachers. There may have been good reasons for this anxiety and justification for the Inspectors' reports; what is missing, however, is any sense of improvement. If present-day assessment is not inextricably linked to that then the results are likely to be depressing as those recorded c1860—1880.

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#### References:—

- 1 E. H. Carr, *What is History?* MacMillan 1961 p24.
- 2 These can be consulted in the County Record Office, Gloucester.
- 3 On 22 November, 1866 two girls each received a pair of gloves from their teacher, Elizabeth Grandfield, to mark their level of attainment in needlework.
- 4 This kind of Lesson originates in Locke's philosophy interpreted by Rousseau and emphasises drawing upon the children's interests. Further comment in G. H. Bantock, *The Dilemma of the Curriculum*, Martin Robertson, Oxford 1980.
- 5 *Reports of the Assistant Commissioners appointed to enquire into the State of Popular Education in England (Newcastle Report)* vol. 2, p274.
- 6 Address *Popular Education 1886* in *Educating our Masters* D. A. Reeder, (ed.) Leicester Univ. Press 1980.