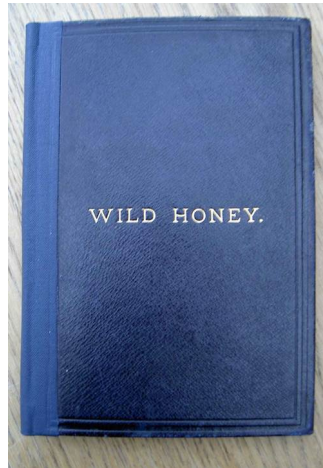


'Wild Honey'

How the purchase of a book of poetry led to some interesting discoveries about a prominent local business man in the late 1800's.

The slim volume of verse, entitled *'Wild Honey'*, was spotted in a charity shop in Stroud, and although the spine was broken and the end papers damaged the title intrigued sufficiently for me, as a trainee book binder, to purchase a book that would test my newly acquired skills and also be enjoyable to read.

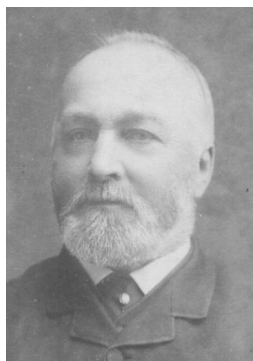


The author was J.B. Marmont and the copy I had purchased was dedicated to:-

'My dear Son, Basil, with his father's love, and abiding affection. J B Marmont'

The publisher was Passmore & Alabaster of London. The volume contains a preface and 34 poems written between 1842 and 1895

I deduced that the poet might have some local connection as the second poem entitled *'Summer Morning - Upon the Cotswolds'* is set on Selsley Hill. His topics for the poems are very varied, with themes such as *'Spritual Beauty'*, *'The School Picnic'* and *'Social Problems'* Two poems intimate his travels, one entitled *'The Lake District'* and another written aboard the SS Sardinian, entitled *'Success to "Arcady," Canada'*. Three of the poems are dedicated to his children that had died; Percy in 1850, Lucy in 1889 and Cecil, the following year, 1890. The last poem entitled *'To my City Friends - A Farewell'* muses on his business life and valued friendships.



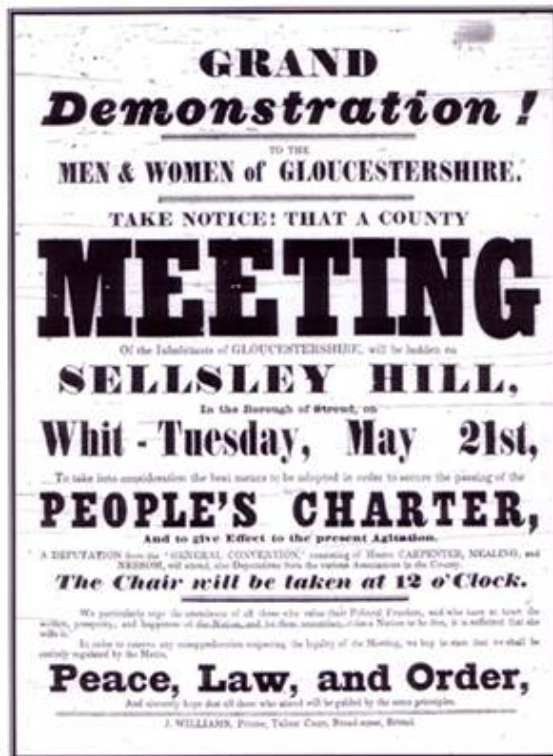
Joseph Blackmore Marmont b1822 - d1914

My interest was aroused to find out more about the author, Joseph Blackmore Marmont and from the 1881 Census he was found living with his family at Windsor Edge House, Avening with an extended household. He was described as aged 58, born in Avening and his occupation was listed as Pin Manufacturer. With him was his wife Sarah aged 60, also of Avening, his son Watson aged 22, also a Pin Manufacturer, his daughter Minnie aged 17 and a married daughter Helen with her husband, two children, a visitor and two servants.

From this start, his life was traced back to the 1841 Census where he is described as 18 years of age and a Pin Maker. He was living with two 40 year old women Mary Marmont and Elizabeth Marmont, one of whom was presumably his mother. Ten years later, in 1851, Joseph is living in Tetbury together with his wife Sarah, a son Cecil aged 3, a son Arthur aged 1 and a daughter Lucy of a few months. Percy their first child born in 1845, had sadly died in 1850 and has a poem dedicated to him. The poems and the Census entries for the years 1851 through to 1881 show that Joseph and Sarah produced a total of 11 children, the last, Mabel, born in 1864.

Further interesting information came to light after making contact via the web with Joseph's great grandson Ian Price in Canada. It is thanks to information provided by Ian and his family that I discovered more about Joseph and his children in their later years.

Joseph and his wife Sarah had both come from humble backgrounds and perhaps that is why they were interested in improving the lives of working men and women. Joseph's interests and achievements to improve the lives of others were very much part of his life from an early age. Social reform was something he believed in and in his early days he had agitated for reform of the Corn Laws and was a very active member of the Chartist movement, together with his friend Henry Vincent. They almost certainly attended the Chartist meeting held on Selsley Hill on Whit Monday in 1849.



Chartist rallies seemed to bring violence and vandalism in their wake – especially when the main speaker was a charismatic orator such as local man Henry Vincent.

As a result local magistrates were justifiably apprehensive when a poster appeared inviting people to the gathering on Selsley Hill.

Headline -May 21st 1839

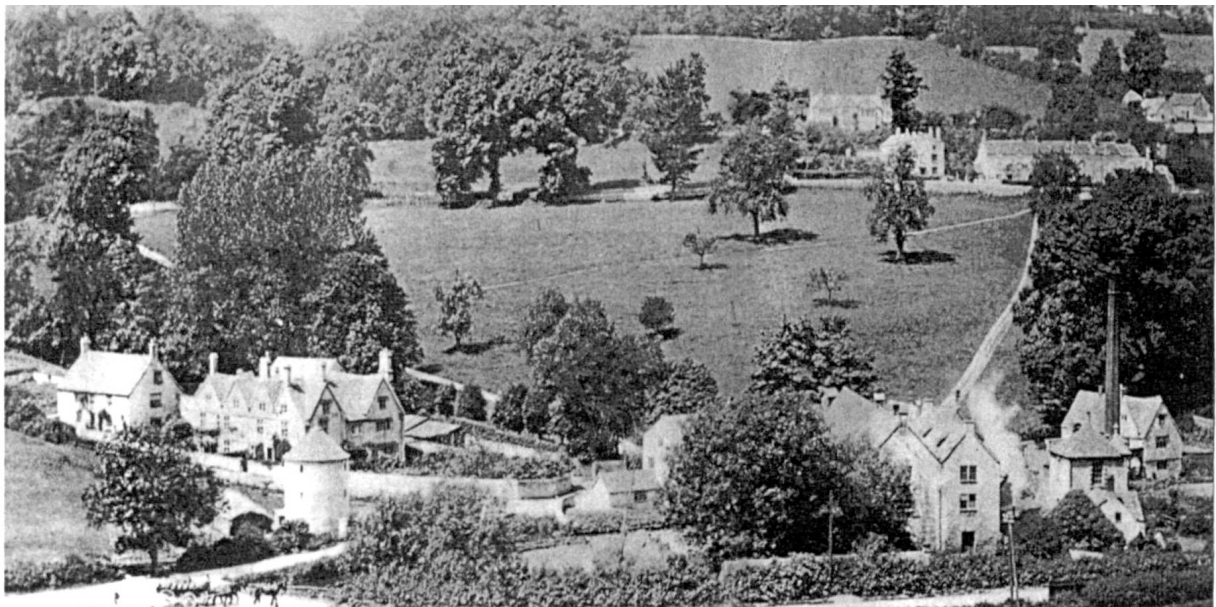
'Chartists:- One policeman struggles to control a 3000-strong mob when Selsley erupts into violence during the Whitsun holiday.'

Why Selsley?

It is assumed that this particular hill had been chosen because it was in the Stroud constituency of Lord John Russell MP, who happened to be Home Secretary at the time.



Joseph and Henry resigned their membership of the chartists following the riots at Newport later that same year.



Frogmarsh Mill c1900 –
The pin manufactory was in the square building to the right of the picture.

Joseph's business success stemmed from a partnership set up with fellow engineering apprentices Albert Perkins and Henry Critchley. These three young apprentices had found themselves through no fault of their own redundant, this at a time when there was no redundancy pay; many of their fellow workers left the area to work in the pin making centers such as Gloucester and Birmingham. Joseph Albert and Henry made a plan for the future over a pint in the Ten Bells to set up their own company. Perkins was to oversee engineering, Critchley finance and Marmont sales and marketing, all having had no previous experience. Following an initial period of experimentation, using sheds behind the Ten Bells, they moved their production to Frogmarsh Mill, in 1854, it had previously been an old cloth mill.

They were highly successful and eventually became the dominant pin manufacturing company in the area.

Cracks began to appear in the partnership thirty years later. It was caused by serious disagreements over the relative merits of their sons becoming partners in the firm, a problem that required independent arbitration. In 1883, following the disagreement, the Critchley family set up their own rival business Critchley Brothers at Wimberley Mills. Joseph retired from the business in 1881 and his son Watson continued in partnership with Perkins, running the business Perkins & Marmont until it closed in 1934.

Critchley Bros eventually overtook Perkins and Marmont in profitability and they celebrated 100 years with a visit by Princess Ann in 1983.

During these exciting years of business Joseph and his wife were champions of the Sunday School movement at Forest Green Chapel and later staunch supporters of the successful Nailsworth Literary and Mechanics Institute, particularly after it was re built. Sarah his wife was the first Honorary Secretary. This place of learning gave the town of Nailsworth the accolade '*Modern Athens*'.



Nailsworth Literary and Mechanical institute c1870

Following his retirement from the company and the death of his wife Sarah in 1882 Joseph's life took a new direction and he moved to London where for a while he worked as an accountant. In the autumn of 1886 he married for the second time to Harmon ('Dorothy') Orchard in London. Here he lived at 9, Crouch Hill, Islington, London, until his death on 3-Jun-1914. Joseph is one of the few to enjoy the interesting statistic of having celebrated two silver wedding anniversaries in his lifetime. His body was brought back to Stroud and buried on the 6-Jun-1914 in Forest Green Cemetery.

Below are the transcripts of a Newspaper obituary and description of the funeral. The last paragraph (highlighted) of the obituary was of particular interest to me as it gave an account of his publishing the book '*Wild Honey*'.

(publisher unknown but probably the Stroud Journal), on June 5th 1914 :-

DEATH OF MR. JOSEPH B. MARMONT

There passed away on Wednesday Joseph Blackmore Marmont, late of Nailsworth, and Crouch Hill, London, in the ninety second year of his age. Mr. Marmont had enjoyed remarkably good health up to a year ago when he began to feel the burden of the years, but it is only a few weeks since that he was obliged to take to his bed, and slowly losing strength and vitality, he gently passed away in sleep; a gentleman of retiring habits and literary tastes.

For many years he was a partner in the firm of Perkins, Critchley and Marmont, pin manufacturers, Woodchester, Stroud, but retired from the business over 20 years ago, since which time he has resided in London. In his early manhood he took part in the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws, and also in the Chartist movement for enlarging the franchise, until that movement became revolutionary and threatened the safety of the State, for by that time it had become necessary to put sandbags and cannon on the Bank Of England to protect it and the City from the inrush of ten thousand Chartists.

Mr. Marmont was a loyal supporter and co-worker with Henry Vincent, one of the leading spirits of the movement, but both withdrew their support after the Newport attempt at revolution. Mr. Marmont did not again enter the political arena, and Mr. Vincent became a celebrated lecturer.

With a young growing family, and close application to business, Mr. Marmont had little leisure to indulge his passion for literary pursuits in the early days of his career, but he seized every opportunity. He got through much reading while travelling for his firm, and his evenings away from home were spent in quiet study, and intercourse with genial spirits which greatly broadened his mind and made him a tolerant large-hearted man.

In his wife he had a true help-mate who entered into his ideals with sympathy and equal ability. It is not too much to say that but for the united efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Marmont the Nailsworth Literary and Mechanics' Institute would never have existed. Mrs. Marmont was the first Honorary Secretary, and in the palmy days it was a means of education second to none (for its size) in the County of Gloucestershire. The best London and Scottish lecturers were obtained, local talent was encouraged, the best music given, so that the little village earned the name of Modern Athens.

Mr. Marmont was a great worker for the Sunday School movement, and when at home always conducted a large class of young men at the Forest Green Church.

His name will hardly be remembered by the present generation, but there are still a few friends in Nailsworth and Stroud who knew him in middle life. Mr. Marmont was twice married and has celebrated two silver wedding days, a rather unusual experience. His second wife, a Devonshire lady, and a descendant of the Gurneys (of Quaker fame) survives him, also three sons and four daughters, namely Messrs. Watson, Lindsay and Basil Marmont, Mrs. S. J. Newman of Grigshot, Mrs. Tyler of Nailsworth, Mrs. C. A. Ridgway of Dewsbury, and Mrs. Watkin Lewis of Amberley.

Some years ago Mr. Marmont published a volume of poems which was very favourably received by the Press, and only a few weeks before his last illness he was honoured by a request for a volume to be placed in the Gloucester Library among the "Men of Gloucestershire" who have enriched it by original poetry and prose. Mr. Marmont belonged to the "old" Liberal Party, and was a staunch Free Churchman. He was a constant reader of the "Stroud Journal", and when visiting our neighbourhood he made a point of calling on the editor to exchange greetings, and sometimes to submit a set of original verses for his criticism and approval.

The following are excerpts from the account of J. B. Marmont's funeral which appeared in a newspaper (publisher unknown), in June 1914 :-

The funeral of Mr. J. B. Marmont, formerly of Nailsworth, who died at his London residence, Crouch Hill, Finsbury Park, N., took place on Saturday afternoon in the Cemetery at Forest Green. Mr. Marmont, who was in his 92nd year, was a well known pin manufacturer in the neighbourhood and in the West. He had been ill for some time, and therefore his end was not unexpected. He was for many years a partner with the late Mr. Alfred Perkins, in the firm of Messrs. Perkins, Critchley and Marmont, of Frogmarsh Mills, Woodchester. During his residence at Nailsworth, Mr. Marmont identified himself with the Forest Green Chapel, being a deacon and prominent worker at that place of worship.

Residents of the district entertained a deep respect for him, and a tribute of esteem was forthcoming at the funeral when a large number attended to pay their last honour to his memory.

The body was conveyed from London by motor hearse in the morning, proceeding direct to the Lower Forest Green Congregational Chapel, where the first part of the burial service was conducted by Mr. A. C. Blake. In the course of the service he referred to the deceased gentleman in sympathetic terms. ...

... As a man, he was happy in his disposition and genial in his manner; as a friend he was constant and true; as a businessman, punctual and energetic in all his doings. In social life he was interesting because he was a well read man. In intercourse with him one could touch upon almost any topic that was given in the day, and he was prepared to enter into thoughts concerning it. He was full of life and enjoyment, and was as much at home there as in philosophy. As a Christian he was full of faith. Of the ultimate triumph of good over evil, he was certain. ...

The body was enclosed in an elm shell, the coffin being of oak with brass furniture, and the breast-plate bore the inscription:-

"JOSEPH BLACKMORE MARMONT Died 3rd June, 1914, Aged 91 years. 'Peace, Perfect Peace.' "

The bearers were employees at Frogmarsh Pin Mills, ...

Children of Joseph Blackmore Marmont

Some interesting information also came to light regarding some of his children.

His daughter Juliet Sarah, born in 1852, married Samuel John Newman II in 1875. Samuel had been born in 1848 in Sevastopol, Crimea, Russia, and his occupation was brass-founder & mechanical engineer. He started his business enterprise in sheds behind his home. In 1871 he was living in Horsley, Glos, and by 1891 in Giddynap Amberley, Glos. Eventually moving to Grigshot House. He was the founder of Messrs. Newman, Hender and Co. Ltd. As well as a local business man he was also a Justice of the Peace.



Mrs Juliet Newman (nee Marmont)
Julia died in 1939 and is buried in Forest Green Cemetery. Below are two obituaries



Mr Samuel John Newman

An obituary in a contemporary newspaper said:-

"Born at Windsoredge, Mrs. Newman was the daughter of Mr. Joseph Blackmore Marmont, who was Partner in the Firm of Messrs. Marmont & Perkins. She was the oldest surviving daughter. She had resided in Woodchester (at Grigshot House) for the past 40 years but for the last 5 she had suffered ill health. Mrs. Newman always gave most generously to all charities and her kindness as well as her happy disposition earned her the respect of a wide circle of friends. She will be laid to rest beside her late husband at Forest Green Cemetary.

An article in the local Gloucestershire paper, said:-

Grigshot House, Woodchester (actually in Rodborough Parish), the home of Mrs. S.J. Newman, whose death was reported last week, was honoured by the visit on August 14th, 1788, of George III and his Royal Consort, Queen Charlotte, with the three eldest Princesses. This visit, of course, has been recorded on countless occasions, but the death of Mrs. Newman reminds us of her belief that King George actually held a Court at Grigshot. The owner in those days was Mr. Obadiah Paul, who had invited the Royal party to inspect his clothing manufactory at Woodchester Mill, and it is probable that refreshments were served in the picturesque Queen Anne house which stands by the roadside not far from Woodchester Mill (now occupied by the Bentley Piano Company and the scene of a big fire last year). The Royal party had breakfasted at Hill House (on the Bear Hill where Lord John Russell lived for a time) as the guests of Sir George Onesiphorous Paul, and after their visit to Grigshot House and Woodchester Mill they went on to Spring Park (now Woodchester Park) where the Rt. Hon. Francis Lord Ducie entertained them. It was not this visit, but that of George III's father, Frederick Prine of Wales, to Southfield Mill on July 18th, 1750, that inspired the famous Chronicles of Gotham. [the article continued...]



THE NEWMANS AT GRIGSHOT
(circa 1910)

(In car) LUCY, MARION (Cousin from Bristol), Driver (unknown), JACK
(3rd rear seat passenger unknown)

(On balcony and steps) JULIET, MONT RIDGWAY and MAY (probably engaged)

(In window) SAM

The car is believed to be a 1908 WOLSELEY-SIDDELEY



Newman family c1900



Newman Price wedding 1919

Another member of the family, who was something of a character, was Joseph's youngest son Basil. His occupation, until 1927, was a director of the Dunkirk factory of the Birmingham

firm of Wright, Brindley and Gell Ltd, who made brass umbrella fittings. The building was once referred to in 'John Halifax Gentleman'. Basil had interests in music, local history and archaeology. He was responsible for discovering the existence of the old Flemish glass manufactory in Woodchester Park, and, by arrangement with Dr St Clair Baddeley, his finds were displayed in the Gloucester City Museum. His death occurred in 1947 at the age of 85. His great niece Joyce Stone (nee Newman) writes an account below of her memories of him:-



Basil Philip Marmont b1862 - d1947

'My great-uncle Boshier; whose real name was Basil Marmont, was an eccentric to whom I gave a generous portion of my childhood affection. I can picture him now, I, around 13 years old and he probably in his late sixties, balding with his spectacles pushed back on the top of his head and chin covered in grey stubble - did he ever shave I wonder? - swaying from side to side with a glass of Harvey's Bristol Cream in one hand and using the other to conduct Gounod's Faust played on a wind-up gramophone with a large horn, and he all oblivious to his surroundings.

When silence came, he'd open his watery grey-blue eyes, look at me, and say "Ah, Gypsy eyes wasn't that wonderful?" I never thought to ask him how I had acquired such a strange nickname, since I was hazel-eyed, round faced, and certainly didn't resemble a gypsy.

My visits to his large old Costwold stone house were usually made with my parents on a Sunday evening around eight o'clock. Often when it was cold and dark, we'd wrap up warmly and my father, armed with a thumbstick and torch would escort us down the steep hill on which we lived, past his factory in the Woodchester valley, then ascend an even steeper hill (one inch in four) till we arrived slightly out of breath on Boshier's doorstep. The pull on the bell handle would bring a shadowy figure from somewhere at the back of the house, and Lucy would show us in to Boshier's living room.. I took little notice of Lucy if that was her name; she committed suicide, having been found a mile away from the house with her feet sticking up out of a muddy pond next to a bacon curing factory in the next valley called Shortwood. Boshier would warmly welcome us and my parents would accept whatever beverage was offered them. Having had his stubbly cheek rubbed against mine, I was happy to find an upright chair away from the fumes of the burning oil lamp, the only light in the room, standing in the middle of a large table covered in red chenille. Heaven knows he was comfortably off and could have afforded gas and electricity, but not for him "these modern inventions of the Devil".



Dunkirk Mill – As it appears today

Even his business, a factory mentioned in "John Halifax Gentleman", had a few work hands, a so-called secretary, but no telephone. My father would say to him "Good God Boshier, bring yourself up to date man!". Boshier would reply, "Why, Umby (my father's name was Percy), I'll have gas if you insist because if it leaks I can bung the pipe up with a hammer, but electricity - never!" And he was true to his word. What a house and what a set-up! My father had been born in that house, called Windsor Edge, and nothing, not even the wallpaper, had been changed in 50 years.

Lucy used to cook the Sunday joint on a spit turning slowly over an open range. Other foods were cooked on a smelly paraffin stove. Dinner was at 5:30pm sharp, and he laid much store on buying locally the finest meat and fish. He would often be seen walking to Nailsworth a mile up the valley, his head pointing towards his feet and topped with a Panama hat, carrying his purchases in an old woven straw shopping bag.. Boshier once said, "As I was coming down on the 12 o'clock ...", to which my father, knowing quite well that that was the local Bristol Blue Bus, said with a wicked glint in his eye, "Really Boshier I didn't know there was a twelve o'clock from London". Boshier's eyes bulged but they soon returned to normal after another swig of Bristol Cream. He was reputed to drink a bottle a day of that liverish golden liquid. A lot of what he fancied must have done him good since he lived till he was nearly ninety as did most of that generation of Marmonts.

Boshier had special nights for special people. The monks from Woodchester Priory, an order of Dominicans, would visit him on a Monday, and if I woke up at 3 a.m. I would see the light from his oil lamp shining across the valley. There were no street lights. Tuesday night was reserved for the Lloyd's Bank Manager, and the light would be out by 2 a.m.

Boshier had an obese terrier dog called Pumpy who, like his master, appreciated good food. When Boshier dined on the 6:35 pm train from Paddington to Stroud after a day in the City on business, the restaurant staff knew him well and did not raise their eyebrows when a large envelope would be taken from Boshier's pocket and (other than the soup) a sample from each of the other five courses would be stowed away and the envelope sealed. It was for Pumpy, as Pumpy had to savour the GWR's excellent dinner like his master. It must have been a horrid gooey mess that Pumpy was expected to consume. Boshier kept a well stocked cellar and would ascend with a bottle of what he would call Pissass Water for Gypsy Eyes. It was years

later that I learned that that was indeed the real name of a proprietary brand of innocuous mineral water.

Surprisingly, Boshier was not a bachelor; he married a girl who had become pregnant by him and who had died giving birth to a second child. Philley, the remaining daughter was sent to Belgium to a convent school and later became a nun, a little sister of the poor who cared in the East end of London for children with eye diseases. Philley was loved by us all; she came home once a year to see her father; wearing a nun's habit. Eventually she moved into a closed order, but was allowed to visit her father on his death bed.

Boshier was well read and had many hobbies, music being his favorite. A hired taxi would take him the 26 miles to Bristol to Dickson and Pink in Park Street to buy his beloved gramophone records as often as he felt like going. During his long walks in Woodchester Park he would unearth Roman pottery and glass which he displayed in cabinets in the hall. He was an authority on edible fungi and the Napoleonic Wars. I once went to the local cinema with him to see a film whose name I can't remember, but it concerned Napoleon's armies. I was relaxed and enjoying myself when Boshier suddenly rose from his seat and shouted "Tripe, tripe, absolute tripe!" Scarlet faced, I followed him into the street and asked what was the matter? Apparently one of the French soldiers had been wearing the wrong type of tricorne hat!

Boshier never liked his second housekeeper and the last time I saw him alive he told my mother that Mrs. _____ was like living with a tin of grey paint! That idiot housekeeper on his death threw all the Roman relics into the dustbin. His jews harp from which emanated such lovely soft humming chords on a gentle breeze was sent along with his books and paintings to the local auction rooms. Alas I heard of this too late to save anything, but the happy memories are really all that I need.'

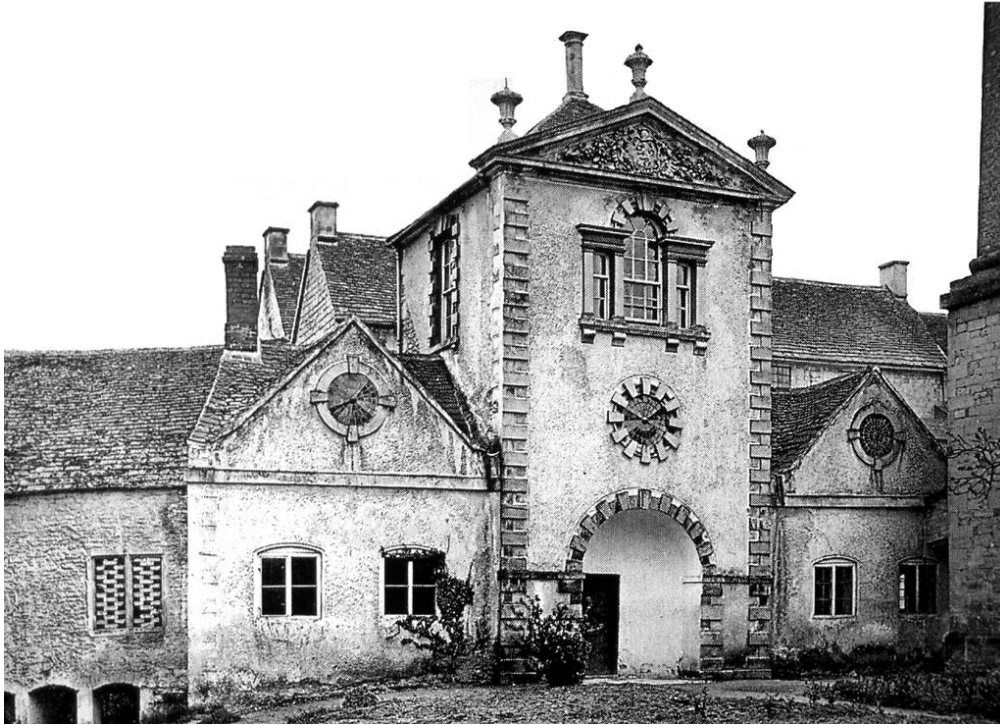
This last paragraph contains the probable explanation of how the little volume of poems dedicated 'to Basil' ended up in a charity shop in Stroud in 2010.

Verse from JB Marmonts poem 'To my city friends'

*"Farewell good friends, our fleeting days
Move onward down life's flowing stream,
Till in "The parting of the ways"
The past will seem as but a dream"*

*The housekeeper was called Julia Turk.

NB: The Pin factory building (Frogmarsh Mill) when no longer in use was dismantled and re-erected as a feature in the National Trust property, Bodnant Gardens, Conway, Wales.



Sources

National Census
GSIA Cloth Pins & leather 1997
Marmont family information
Local Newspaper extracts

Brian Jowett Festomane lecture
'Pinning up the world'
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