

Family History Research Group

Newsletters 31-35

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Family History Research Group Newsletter Thirty-One



Last Week's Mystery Object

Dianne Rawcliffe



My husband's maternal ancestors were members of the Cobham family who were the Mawdesley basket makers. This is a very old handmade willow cutting knife known in Mawdesley as a "twig cutting knife". It is still razor sharp; the original point was worn away by years of cutting twigs from the cultivated willow bushes around Mawdesley. It came from my husband's grandmother Amelia Southworth nee

Leigh, her mother was Jane Cobham daughter of James Cobham born 1856. The knife is thought to have been his but we are not certain.

Surviving Childhood

Christine found the following article while sorting out a drawer. She has no idea who wrote it or who gave it to her.

If you grew up as a child in the 40s, 50s or 60s, looking back, it's hard to believe we have lived as long as we have....

As children, we rode in cars with no seat belts or air bags.

Our cots we covered in bright coloured lead-based paint.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cupboards.

We rode our bikes without helmets.

We made go-carts from scrap and rode down hills, having forgotten to fit brakes.

We would leave home in the morning to play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on.

We didn't have mobile phones, so no one could reach us all day.
We broke bones and teeth, yet there were no compensation claims. No one was to blame as these were accidents. Remember accidents?
We ate cakes, bread and butter and drank cordial, but we were never overweight.
We shared one drink with four friends and no one became ill.
We didn't have Internet chat rooms, we had friends.
We walked to school and walked home again at the end of the day, without a parent or guardian.
We did tests at school and some children didn't pass. Results weren't adjusted to make the school look better.
The past 50 years has seen an explosion of innovation and new ideas and this generation has produced some of the best risk-takers and problem solvers, ever.
We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility and we learned how to deal with it all.
Congratulations to you and all the others who had the luck to grow up as children, before, those who think they know what's best for us, regulated our lives.

More Thoughts on Surviving Childhood

Janice Parr

I know that the childhood of my parents was very different from my own and that of my brothers. Mum and Dad worked extremely hard to make sure that it was. They both came from very caring families who did the same for them.

To the thoughts that Christine has shared with us, I would like to add some of my mother's.

"You have to eat a pound of muck before you die!" was one of her many sayings; she repeated it throughout her life. She constantly bleached surfaces, dish clothes and handkerchiefs but wasn't as fussy about other things. I well remember her fear of using public toilets and the routine she went through before we were allowed to use them. This was accompanied with her saying "you never know what you might catch".

She lived until she was nearly ninety- nine but was as a child was considered to be frail and sickly. She put down her survival to her parents spending most of their money on good food and always believed that - "you are what you eat" (another of her sayings).

She made sure we were always clean and appropriately dressed. Before going out in public, my hair was tugged back and tightly plaited to help keep the dreaded head lice at bay; I was sent off with a warning to keep clear of certain children. Her regime worked because I avoided the wretched things until I started teaching small children, social distancing isn't what we did then.



A photo taken after a bit of messy fun in the garden!

Failure to wash hands before eating was not an option, but making mud pies in the garden and getting filthy while playing out was fine as long as we were wearing old clothes.

I am not sure how she would have adapted to the constant hand washing and sanitising we are carrying out at the moment.

An intriguing thing about the old wall in the photo is that when the ivy was removed so that it could be white washed, the whole thing collapsed during a thunder storm. Within it was a chimney breast and when my dad inherited the property in the mid 50s and received the deeds we discovered that a house had existed on the site and at one time had been occupied by a curate. What a pity the deeds would have been destroyed when Towngate was demolished for redevelopment, they might have made interesting reading.

I'm not aware of anyone in my extended family having their lives taken by the Spanish flu but perhaps it was the reason Mum was sent off to the tiny village of Slyne to live with her aunt's family, she attended school there for a while. Perhaps it was also the Spanish flu which robbed her older sister of her hearing. The epidemic was such a huge thing, claimed so many lives and affected the country so much it is surprising that my family never mentioned it.

Mystery Object of the Week



Many of you will probably know what this object is and what it was used for used. The mystery this week is to identify who owns it now; there is a clue in the Newsletter sent out just before Christmas.

History of Mawdesley

One of our members identified what Diane's knife was and what it was used for. She is already writing an article about her family connection with the basket making industry.

I would love to hear from anyone else with family connections with Mawdesley or has any information about the history of the village.

I am particularly interested in knowing where the willow was grown.

Janice

Family History Research Group

Newsletter Thirty-Two



Our Virtual Museum of Curiosities

Last Week's Mystery Object

Linda Mogg



The brass lyre is a sheet music holder possibly for a cornet or trumpet. My father had cello lessons as a child so not sure of its origin; however, I believe my grandfather was keen on the Salvation Army so perhaps it came from there. It reminds me of my father's love of classical music.

MY OLD CLOCK

Anne Sheppard

Those of you who lived in or near Preston may remember the Scout Bus Station in Starchouse Square which was demolished in the late 50s or early 60s. The waiting room was a strange triangular room with plush seats (probably from old buses) and open to the square at the front. This clock was on the wall at the apex of the triangle to tell passengers the time. As I recall the waiting room was not staffed and amazingly no one seemed to have vandalised or stolen the clock! My great uncle Arthur Johnson worked as a mechanic for Scout buses and when the building was being demolished to make way for the new ring road he asked what would happen to the old clock. When he was told that it would be thrown away, he asked if he could have it and they agreed. When he and



my great aunt died in the early 70s I was lucky enough to inherit the clock which now hangs in my living room. It is not valuable but a part of Preston's history. The hands are held together with a bent pin and it still keeps good time after the 50 years I have had it! Once when I had it serviced the clock repairer asked if I wanted him to put matching beading on the right top and bottom of the clock. Prior to this the beading was only on the left and front side as the clock had been fitted into the corner of the waiting room so I had this done. I wind it once a week and it keeps good time though I don't wind the chimes!



Photo taken c1900

This area was cleared to make way for the Starchouse Square bus depot. The covered market can be seen looming in the far right distance.



Photo taken c1939

Image courtesy of H. Robb

Arms is seen in the background.

The Painters

Both of the above images were found on [Preston Digital Archive](#) a search will find more related images.

Anne supplied the following information "At the corner of the square was the Painters Arms which was a rough pub where my Mum was once pressed into playing the piano for a drunken group, I think they were celebrating VE Day. Apparently there was so much beer sloshing around it was pouring off the pub tables and flooding the floor! My Mum was such a quiet person she must have wondered what on earth she had got into when she said she could play the piano! "

We seem to have come back full circle back to V.E. Day where our Newsletters started last year!

<http://pubsinpreston.blogspot.com/2012/03/painters-arms-high-street.html>

Mystery of the Week

After reading last week's Newsletter Christine wondered if there was any mention of the Spanish flu in the log book from Abbey Village which she just happens to have a copy of. She found that scarlet fever was mentioned in 1874 but there is very little recorded for 1917 - 24 with no reference to Spanish Flu.

There was an interesting list of items for an infant lesson in 1888.

Common Things: Black, sealing wax, coal, soap, egg, cinnamon, salt, iron, lead, paper, water, cork, slate, thimble, teapot.

Christine would like to know what topic they were doing and would have loved to have observed the lesson.

Can anyone suggest what the Aims and Objectives of the lesson might have been?

Mystery Items



Any idea what these tools were used for?



Family History Research Group Newsletter Thirty-Three



Our Virtual Museum of Curiosities Mysteries Solved!

Christine

It's a rug and carpet maker, the item is pristine and in its box, I don't remember ever seeing it being used.



These items however were often used to make rugs. Auntie Nellie made the wooden templates to enable Grandma to wrap round a skein of wool and cut with scissors, using the groove as a guide. The individual lengths of wool would then be pushed through a hessian base and pulled back through the loops to knot them in place.

Grandma's kitchen floor was covered in rag rugs, but the wool ones had pride of place in front of the hearth or by the side of the beds. As a teenager, they taught me the skill and I even made a rug to take with me when I left home to go to college.

Joy

These tools along with others were brought from Clitheroe and had belonged to my mother-in-law, someone I never met. The wheel was used with special different coloured carbon paper to mark seam allowances, darts and notches before



cutting out. The middle tool is for making rag rugs. I'm not sure about the fork like one; I wondered if maybe felt making or something similar

These are also rug making tools



When I was teaching, one of our topics was transport. We took the children (Y1 age 5-6) to Ellesmere Port Boat Museum.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/national-waterways-museum>

Sitting where the Shropshire Union Canal meets the Manchester Ship Canal and the River Mersey there are locks, basins and buildings within the museum. You can go inside several barges that were used for carrying various commodities. The living quarters of some bargees are 'dressed' and there is a row of canal workers' cottages', the interiors showing different decades. There is also an indoor museum.

Back to the school trip; when we were there we did a workshop making a bargees cabin. We made paper snowflakes to represent lace work, painted roses and castles and then coloured paper plates with threaded ribbon round the edge. We even made a horse tail out of plaited wool (apparently, they kept the tails of deceased ones as good luck symbols). We also made a small rag rug.

Back at school we used all these to make a barge cabin play area which the children always enjoyed. Using my old tools (which belonged to my mother-in-law) the children made a larger rug for their cabin.

Unfortunately, I didn't take a photograph but it was something like this



Joy thinks that the museum is a great place to visit, and not just not for children.



Another rug making artefact from Joy's collection

Anne

When I was quite young (under 10) we made rag rugs as a family. They were for the very cold quarry tiled floor in the kitchen and the bare floorboards elsewhere.

Janice

During the 50s we also lived in a cold draughty house. The floorboards upstairs were covered with linoleum, which perhaps years before had been manufactured in Lancaster. Linoleum is a term used for a smooth floor covering made from a solidified mixture of linseed oil, flax, cork, wood flour and pigments, pressed between heavy rollers onto a canvas backing.

<https://www.lancaster.gov.uk/the-council-and-democracy/civic-andceremonial/lord-ashton-the-lino-king> .

Mum crocheted mats for the bathroom and bedrooms; I think they were made out of strips of old fabric so they would have been a type of rag rug. The downstairs rooms were flagged; there was a large sisal mat covering most of the living room floor and there was a purchased hearth rug in front of the fire, the only warm place in the house. When I was still very young a dirty, smelly truck arrived and asphalt was

poured on the floor of this room. I remember there being a lot of flames, smoke and noxious fumes, I was worried! Once it had cooled, down went the matting again.

Joan

I have one of those wooden rug things and had forgotten what it was for. Harry made a rug early on in either our courtship or marriage. In the end we used it to wrap our dog Mick after he died, so it is buried in the garden.

This Week's Mystery

The photo is of the dad of one or our members. Where do you think it was taken?



Family History Research Group Newsletter Thirty-Four



Janice

The photo is of Joy's dad Thomas Douglas Edwards and was possibly taken in Palestine. He was born in 1918 so he was in the war from the beginning age 21. He joined the Territorial Army before the war and was in the Royal Army Service Corps. Joy sent for his war records last year, they were free because her mum is still alive and could sign for them. Tom went off to war with his camera, cine camera



Some of Tom's Photos



Children in Suez

A shoe shine boy in Damascus



The Ramesseum at Thebe

Beirut



Joy has several wartime letters sent by her dad, a few to his mother, one about the economics of the war to his cousin and one in rhyme to another cousin. The first in a series of letters to his sister Gladys can be read below. She was four years older than Tom and was a teacher at Ormskirk Senior Girls School teaching Geography and P.E.

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No. 1

T 88003
Dvr. T.D.Edwards,
F50 Coy. R.A.S.C.
1st Cavalry Division,
PALESTINE.

The Pupils,
Ormskirk Senior Girls School,
Ormskirk.

Dear Girls,

You will perhaps be surprised at receiving a letter from someone so very far away from Ormskirk, and whom you may never have seen, so I think I should commence by introducing myself to you. I am the Brother of your Geography Mistress, Miss Edwards, I was born in Bickerstaffe, and have lived all my life in the vicinity of Ormskirk, so you see it is not so surprising, after all, that I should take an interest in you, and in your school. I have introduced myself to you roughly, but you are still at a disadvantage, because, whereas I, knowing what your school and class rooms look like, can visualise you sat at your desks, you will probably be unable to picture me writing this letter, so just for a moment, I want you to imagine that by some wonderful process, you can suddenly fly through the 3000 or so miles which separates us, and walk towards my tent. As you approach, you will see what appears to be a white bungalow, twenty feet long, and fifteen feet wide, with a wide doorway in the centre of the front wall, and on each side of it a window, divided into small panes, like the windows in our old English cottages. When you get nearer you will be surprised to find, that what you had thought was a bungalow, is really a tent, but a tent of an entirely different kind to any you may have seen before. If you examine it closely you will see that this tent has two roofs, the top one (fly) being covered by a blue material on the inside, and with a gap of about two feet separating it from the inner roof which is covered on it's outer side with blue material, so that the blue sides of both roofs face each other. The reason for these elaborate roofs is that out here during the summer, the sun's rays are so strong, and the heat so intense, that if we had the usual canvas roof, the heat inside the tent would be unbearable, whereas, with the type of tent I have endeavoured to describe to you, the sun's rays which fall on the outer roof, are not re-radiated very easily by the blue material on it's underside, to the blue material of the inner roof, (if you ask the Mistress in charge of you physics laboratory, no doubt she will explain to you why this is so). Now that you are close to the tent, you can see that what you had originally thought were small panes in the windows, are actually holes, the illusion having arisen by the fact that for purposes of strengthening, the window openings have been crossed with strips of canvas webbing. You will also notice that a trench, about a foot deep, and eighteen inches wide, has been dug round the tent, just outside the walls, this is to prevent the tent from becoming flooded when it rains, because when it rains out here, it does so, very heavily, and a large quantity of water falls in a short time. Come now, and take a peep into

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2.
the tent, step across the boards which cover the trench by the doorway, and the first thing you notice is that the back of the tent has a door, and windows, wide open for fresh air, just like those at the front. The next thing you notice is the light, and fresh feeling, which is given to the interior of the tent by the light orange colour of the walls and ceiling, and then as you look around, you spot me, sitting in my shirt sleeves on a board on the floor, in the left hand corner of the tent, with a writing pad on my knees, and with perspiration streaming down my face, because, outside the temperature is over 90° and even in the comparative coolness of the tent, one perspires freely when doing nothing more energetic than sitting down. Now that you can visualise me as I sit writing this letter to you, I will go back to the beginning and tell you how I come to be out here.

In the spring of last year (1939) when international relations were daily becoming more strained, and the probability of England becoming once again engaged in a European War, was becoming more and more obvious, I along with many of my friends, joined the Territorial Army, the section I joined being that branch of the Royal Army Service Corps, which had its headquarters at Southport. You must all be aware of the sequence of events which took place in the summer of last year, culminating in the invasion of Poland by the German Army at 5.30 am. on September 1st and the declaration of war by the Allies in fulfilment of the pledge they had given to Poland. Before I go on to tell you how the declaration of war affected myself, I think it might interest you if I give you an exact copy of two of the most important messages of our time, both these messages were from the Prime Minister of England, the first being the last warning which was handed in document form to Herr Hitler, by the British Ambassador in Berlin, and the second, the declaration of war made over the wireless by the Prime Minister (Mr. Neville Chamberlain) at 11.15 a.m. on Sunday September 3rd. 1939.

(1) Copy of the document handed to the German Government (2/8/39) by His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin:-

" Early this morning the German Chancellor issued a proclamation to the German Army which indicated clearly that he was about to attack Poland. Information which has reached His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government indicates that German troops have crossed the Polish frontier, and that attacks upon Polish towns are proceeding. In these circumstances it appears to the Government of the United Kingdom and of France, that by their action the German Government have created conditions, namely, an aggressive act of force against Poland, threatening the independence of Poland, which call for the implementation by the Governments of the United Kingdom and of France, of the undertaking to Poland to come to her assistance. I am accordingly to inform your Excellency that unless satisfactory assurances that the German Government have suspended all aggressive action against Poland, and are prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will, without hesitation fulfil their obligations to Poland. "

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As you all know the German Government did not give a satisfactory reply to this note, and so on the following day we got:-

(ii)

Broadcast message to the British Nation by the Prime Minister at 11.15 a.m. on September 3rd 1939.

" I am speaking to you from the Cabinet room at 10, Downing Street. This morning the British Ambassador in Berlin handed the German Government a final Note, stating that, unless we heard from them by eleven o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you now, that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany.

You can imagine what a bitter blow it is to me, that all my long struggle to win peace has failed. Yet I cannot believe that there is anything more, or anything different that I could have done, and that would have been more successful.

Up to the very last, it would have been quite possible to have arranged a peaceful and honourable settlement between Germany and Poland, but Hitler would not have it. He had evidently made up his mind to attack Poland, whatever happened, and although he now says he put forward reasonable proposals, which were rejected by the Poles, that is not a true statement. The proposals were never shown to the Poles, nor to us, and, though they were announced in a German broadcast on Thursday night, Hitler did not wait to hear comments on them, but ordered his troops to cross the Polish frontier. His action shows convincingly that there is no chance of expecting that this man will ever give up his practice of using force to gain his will. He can only be stopped by force.

We, and France, are to-day, in fulfilment of our obligations, going to the aid of Poland, who is so bravely resisting this wicked and unprovoked attack on her people. We have a clear conscience. We have done all that any country could do, to establish peace. The situation in which, no word given by Germany's ruler could be trusted, and no people or country, could feel themselves safe, has become intolerable. And now that we have resolved to finish it, I know that you will all play your part with calmness and courage.

At such a moment as this, the assurances of support that we have received from the Empire are a source of profound encouragement to us.

When I have finished speaking, certain detailed announcements will be made on behalf of the Government. Give these your closest attention.

Now may God bless you all. May he defend the right. It is the evil things that we shall be fighting against - brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression, and persecution - and against them I am certain that the right will prevail "

I sincerely hope that the two quotations I have made, have not proved to be too dull for you, I have given them to you in full, because I think that every Englishman should know their contents, and knowing, should understand. It is as a direct result of these two statements, that this war, upon which we are now engaged, and which has changed the entire course of all our lives, perhaps for ever, came into being.

When the German Army crossed the Polish frontier on September 1st

PAGE 4 OF LETTER

is was obvious to the British Government that they must act at once, consequently on September 2nd, His Majesty issued a proclamation, which was broadcast at 4 p.m., calling to the colours all trained men. As you will probably remember that was the first day of the evacuation, when the call was made, I was at Sefton station, helping in the reception there, of the evacuated children arriving from Liverpool, and it was not until late that night when I returned to the office, that I was told I had been called up. From September 3rd 1939 to January 17th 1940 I remained stationed in various parts of England, but on January 17th I commenced the three thousand mile journey which ended when I stepped onto the hospitable shore of Palestine, this sunny Mediterranean country, which has, for nearly 2000 years been looked upon by Christians throughout the world as the Holy Land.

With this I must close for the present, and if you have found this letter at all interesting, I may write again at some future date, telling you of the things I have seen, and the impressions that I have formed of this wonderful country. In closing, may I remind you that there is a lot that you can do, young as you are, to help us to bring this war to a successful conclusion. Help all that you can in your homes, and relieve your parents of all anxieties on your account, that they may be more able to bear the tremendous strain which this war imposes on them, for it is the country who has the highest morale at home, that will win the war.

Your sincere friend,

Pre-war, Tom worked at the Council Offices in Ormskirk, when he came home he went into politics and was the agent for the MP in Ormskirk and later West Wiltshire.

Sadly, he passed away when Joy was only five and she has no memory of him.

Link to the Ramesseum at Thebes <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramesseum>

Link to some Pathé footage of the R.A.S.C. in Africa (there isn't any sound on it)

<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/desert-supplies>

Family History Research Group

Newsletter Thirty-Five



FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN THE MAWDESLEY BASKET-MAKING INDUSTRY

Joan Quinlan



Basketworks in 'The City', Mawdesley – early 1920s

Young woman front row – Agnes Parker (see below)

Boy at front right – Billy Barron (see below)

My grandfather, Thomas Hornby Parker, his wife Mary Ellen, and baby daughter Agnes, moved to Mawdesley from Singleton on the Fylde in 1906/7. They had worked on the estate of Thomas Horrocks Miller, owner of Singleton Hall. Thomas Parker had secured new employment at Mawdesley Hall.

My Mum, Ann, was the next child to come into the family, followed by another sister and nine brothers. Sadly, Thomas never got to see his youngest son, because he died before the baby was born. In 1925, Thomas was gathering twigs for the basket-making industry when he cut himself, and died a few days later of Septicaemia at the age of 44. Twigs was the local name given to the willow which was grown in abundance in the Mawdesley area. Gathering the willow was a skilled operation, but it would appear that Thomas's expertise or concentration was lacking! Of course, in those days there would have been no 'health and safety' briefings, no protective clothing, and certainly no antibiotics.

I believe that the cut twigs were graded according to size and put in bundles. They were then boiled until they could be peeled, usually by women and school-children. The next stage was to put the willows to dry until they turned a reddish-brown.

(As a complete aside, this reminded me of a folk song and dance entitled 'Strip the Willow'. I looked it up and you can listen to it on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5hwzWlz9AE>.)

My Mum told me that her father used to 'break in' horses. I don't know whether collecting willow had been another of his tasks, or a side-line. I do know that as well as small central workshops for basket-making, there emerged a thriving cottage industry which continued for many years to come.

When I was a child, my Auntie Agnes Grisdale (nee Parker) used to cycle daily to Mawdesley's workshop in Dark Lane to make baskets alongside other workers. Agnes was my Godmother, and she made this simple basket for my Domestic Science classes when I started Grammar School. The workshop was destroyed in a fire, but the business survived. *(See the newspaper articles below relating to the workshop fire, and Agnes's retirement – we think as late as 1983.)*



Agnes's daughter-in-law, Doreen, made baskets for the Holmes brothers from Parbold from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. They delivered the frames and cane to her at home. Doreen, now aged 91 and living in Eccleston, tells me that at first she earned 12 shillings a dozen and when she finished it had risen to £2 a dozen.

That last child born to Mary Ellen Parker, born after his father had died, was named Harold Hornby Parker. He grew up, married and went to live in Rufford, where in the 1950s, his wife Mabel made baskets at home. Their daughter Kath says that the willow was delivered, then it had to be soaked in water to make it pliable before it could be woven into baskets.

On the other side of my family, my Dad's sister Ellen lived in Mawdesley. Her husband, Billy Barron, had a combination of jobs – working a smallholding, being the local newsagent, and making baskets. He had been a basket-maker ever since he had undertaken a lengthy apprenticeship. He was an expert and did lots of special pieces, including an ornamental basketwork engine. The whole family made baskets for Alco (Alec Coates). *(See the article at the foot of this newsletter, dated 14 December 1949, showing my Uncle Billy Barron, and his sister-in-law, my Auntie Margaret.)* Billy's daughter, Dorothy, tells me that she herself made baskets at home in Rufford when her first two children were very small in the 1960s.



PICTURES: BRIAN McAULY

Death comes to a quiet village

By ALISON PURVIS

PART of a quiet country village has died . . . For the past three generations there has been a basket-works in Mawdesley, near Chorley. It was the village's only industry. But the factory has been destroyed in a fire.

Only five people actually worked at the Dark-lane factory. More than 20 others make and repair baskets and work-stools in their own homes. One of them is grandfather Bill Welch, 67, who lives in Hildesley-lane, only a few yards from the works.

Bill said: "I was 13 when I started. The present owner of the firm, Mr Bill Mawdesley, was just a young lad then. I was apprenticed for six years, and I worked with my father. I didn't really want to go to work, but I had to earn a shilling or two.

"By the early 1920's I suppose I was earning about 42 a week making hampers. Things weren't too good then but they picked up.

"I left the factory when I retired and now I can make and repair baskets at home.

"And now the factory has gone. I saw it from my house, smoke and flames everywhere.

PLACE

"It gives you a funny feeling to see that happen to a place where you have worked all your life."

The Mawdesley family have a large basket works in Cross-street mill, Wigan.

Mrs Mary Mawdesley, wife of the owner, said: "We are the biggest basket makers in the country. We had orders right up to the end of the year at Mawdesley and the fire has done at least £15,000 worth of damage.

"But we will rebuild it and we will try and make up all those orders again."

The works has been in Mawdesley village for at least three generations, from the time when there were plenty of willows in Mawdesley and they made only baskets.

Mrs Agnes Grysdale of Blackmoor-road, was one of the people who worked at the factory.

CYCLE

"I've worked there 40 years. I used to cycle there every day. At first I did basket work with canes but now I do basket-lining.

"I am terrified of fire and it gave me a funny feeling when the factory went up. We were all in there when it started but we rushed out into the road.



● Mrs Mawdesley, the owner of the factory.



● The burnt out shell of the factory.



● Mrs Agnes Grysdale at work in her home.





Three employees of Mawdsley Bleachers with more than 130 years service between them retired recently.

To coincide with their retirements they were given

awards to mark their long service and were also presented with flowers by workmates at the Mawdsley Bleachers factory in Woods Street.

Agnes Grizedale worked

for half a century in the firm's Mawdsley factory, while Alice Parkes completed a similar period at the Wigan offices. The third retirement was that of Margaret Lucas after thirty years at Wigan.

Pictured is the Managing Director of Mawdsley Bleachers, Mr. Peter Mawdsley, congratulating (left to right) Alice Parkes, Margaret Lucas and Agnes Grizedale.



BASKET-MAKING IN A LANCASHIRE VILLAGE



Basket-making has for many years been a local industry at the village of Mawdsley, near Ormskirk. Mr. W. Barron, who now makes baskets only in winter, when things are slack on his small holding, was one of the last people to serve the two-and-a-half years' apprenticeship to the trade thirty years ago. There are now, he said, probably not more than half a dozen fully qualified basket-makers in the district, capable of turning their hand to any product or method. The former wage of 30s. a week for a ten-hour day was not a great attraction, he commented.

To-day mass-production methods have been introduced. Basket-making is still not amenable to machinery, but construction has been broken down into a number of easily-taught jobs, and about 150 of the village people either work in

factories or at their own homes. The main products now are shopping-baskets. One man makes the frame of willow ribs and puts on the handle, girls set in the woven cane ends, and others do the "raddling"—the weaving in of the cane sides and bottom. "Raddling" accounts for the bulk of the work done at home, on which, Mr. Barron estimates, about fifty people in the village must be engaged. Payment is on a piece-work basis and at 1s. 6d. a basket a full-time "raddler" can earn about £1 a day; the making of a frame and handle earns 1s. 9d., and setting-in 8d. With the decorative binding the labour cost is about 4s., and the materials cost about the same. A typical basket sells at about 12s. wholesale.

It is only "spelt-work" which is amenable to mass-production methods—that is, horizontal ribs, with vertically

woven cane. "Stave-work," on which Mr. Barron is seen engaged, is more skilled. The weaving is done horizontally round vertical willow staves which are then woven into a decorative border to edge the basket. Once such a basket is started it must be finished while the dampened willows remain pliable, and frames cannot be stored for future use and distribution, as with "spelt-work."

Much of the willow used to be grown locally, but imported material for the finer work is now cheaper, the labour costs of gathering and peeling first-year growths now make cultivation unprofitable. A very fine type of local willow known as "Old Dick's" had almost disappeared, Mr. Barron says. The locally grown willow is used only for produce-hampers, in which larger second-year growths are used unpeeled.



A Bit of a Puzzle

Janice

It would be great if someone could give me an answer to something I find puzzling. My great grandmother Ellen Thornton can be found working at Nook Farm, Nook Lane Mawdesley on the 1861 census. Her birth was registered in Q.2 1843 at the Ellel register office near Lancaster and she was baptised at St. Michaels, Cockerham 9/7/1843. For generations before, her ancestors had lived in or near Pilling and nowhere else. Why was she in Mawdesley and why was it being claimed that she was rather older than she actually was?

I know that farm workers did move about but there was plenty of farm work in the area she came from. I also know that mistakes about ages were made on census returns but was something else going on?

On the 1871 census she can be found back in the Cockerham area and married.

No. of Subdivs.	Road, Street, etc., and No. or Name of House	No. of Inhabitants	Name and Surname of each Person	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of		Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether Blind, or Deaf and Dumb
						Male	Female			
1	Blue House		William Hignall Head	Wife	Mar	44		Farmer of 16 acres	Warrington	
			Margaret	Wife	Mar	42		Farmer's Wife	do	
			John	Son	Wp	16		Farmer's Son	do	
			Thomas	Son	Wp	14		do	do	
			David	Son	Wp	12		do	do	
			William	Son	Wp	4		do	do	
1	Brown House		Henry Batters Head	Wife	Mar	45		Farmer of 6 acres	Lancashire	
			William Batters	Son	Wp	17		Ag. Lab	do	
			Edward Bates	Son-in-law	Mar	33		Labourer	do	
			Ellie	Daughter	Mar	12		do	do	
			John	Grandson	Wp	10		Employing 2 pigs & 1 dog	do	
1	Black House		Jarvis Batters Head	Wife	Mar	34		Farmer of 6 1/2 acres	do	
			Mary	Wife	Mar	32		Farmer's Wife	do	
			Robert	Son	Wp	7		Schooler	do	
			George	Son	Wp	6		do	do	
			Joseph	Son	Wp	3		do	do	
			William	Son	Wp	2		do	do	
			James	Son	Wp	1		do	do	
			William Thornton	Son	Wp	19		General Servant	do	
1	do		Margaret Hignall Head	Wife	Mar	47		Wp. 1000	do	
1	do		John Hignall Head	Wife	Mar	57		Wp. 1000	do	
			Mary	Wife	Mar	56		Wp. 1000	do	
			Richard	Son	Wp	15		Farmer's Apprentice	do	
			Richard	Son	Wp	12		do	do	
			John	Son	Wp	4		Schooler	do	
Total of Houses...		5	Total of Males and Females...		16					

Perhaps Ellen was looking for a bit of excitement and thought Mawdesley was the place to find it. In 1851 and onwards her family lived out on the marshes in between Pilling and Cockerham and must have been a very lonely place in the 19thc.

Does anyone know anything about Nook Farm, the land being farmed there and the people living there?

Sandside Cottage, Sandside Road, Cockerham

