

A HISTORY OF THE WOOLROOMS IN WORTHINGTON PARISH



1925 PUBLISHED O/S MAP

(Within the red line is the approximate area known as the Woolrooms. Worthington Parish is to the north of the brook and Coleorton Parish to the south.)

BY SAMUEL T STEWART

PREFACE

Although “The Woolrooms” are commonly referred to as being in Coleorton, they are actually in Worthington Parish.

Any additional information on the Woolrooms would be welcomed by the author and can then be included in this free to read publication where relevant.

PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL T STEWART

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A HISTORY OF THE WOOLROOMS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The following is transcribed from "Forgotten Industries" by H. Butler Johnson c.1910

At one time, Coleorton was surrounded by large areas of open moor land; Gelsmoor, Newbold Moor, Worthington Moor, Swannington Common, Thringstone Moor and Cole Orton Moor were large areas of open land, unsuitable for cultivation, but ideal for rough grazing. Sheep were allowed to roam free over these moors, and in doing so, they maintained the scrub vegetation.

The Woolrooms, are the designation of a small hamlet situated between Cole Orton and Griffydam, on the western side of what was formerly Thringstone Moor. This name, The Woolrooms, would seem to indicate a wool depot or storehouse having been located at this spot at some former time, probably in the 13th and 14th centuries when the production of wool for export to Flanders was England's great staple industry. This view is borne out by the fact that the Monks of Garendon Abbey, near Loughborough, owned a bercary (Medieval Sheep Farm) or Sheepfold in the 13th century, which must, if we have interpreted one of the surviving charters of the abbey correctly, have been situated in the mile length of district lying between the Breech (Le Breechad) on the west side of Swannington village and the hamlet of Newbold.

The Woolrooms would come about midway, and as a monastic bercary, included not only folds but also wash pits and all other appendages of a sheep farm, amongst which would be storehouses. It is not unreasonable to assume, that this bercary of the monks must have been situated close by the brook, which now in an attenuated form, runs by the Woolrooms towards Griffydam. This establishment of the Monks, would from the outset connote one or two dwelling places for those employed amongst the sheep, and these would be added to from time to time until the present hamlet came into being. Apart from the presence of a bercary, the hamlet would have been a very suitable site for a wool depot six centuries ago, surrounded as it then was by hundreds of acres of common and moor land on which sheep were kept

In the middle ages, this land was owned by Garendon Abbey, who obtained income from the wool trade with Flanders. It is believed, that the original Woolrooms consisted of a small number of dwellings used by the monks, with a sheepfold in that area, where the wool would have been processed and stored, prior to transportation to a port.

If the reader refers to the book entitled "A Social and Industrial History of Griffydam and Peggs Green" by Samuel T Stewart, which appears as a free to read publication on griffydamhistory.com this contains significant information on the Wool Industry there. It is almost certain that the recordings there would have applied to "The Woolrooms" locality as well. The brook, which would have been essential to the processing of wool, runs to the south of "The Woolrooms" and continues on its course through Griffydam, and became known as Cart Brook there.

Research has failed to reveal anything remaining in the locality of the Woolrooms that has a proven relevance to the wool industry there, however, the author is of the opinion that the old cottages facing the brook, and other buildings long since disappeared, would have been connected with this in times past. Research into this will continue, and if anyone has anything further to contribute, this would be welcomed by the author

SOCIAL HISTORY FACTS AND MEMORIES OF THE WOOLROOMS

TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MAP ON THE FRONT COVER

In the mid 1900's, the Woolrooms was still a cluster of old cottages, some of which had previously been recorded as having thatched roofs. Over the latter years, some have been knocked down and others have been renovated and altered into modern properties. New properties have also replaced old cottages.

In past times, the Woolrooms and the immediate locality, including Rotten Row and Elverston's Yard would have been a hive of social and industrial activity which is all recorded in the book entitled **"A History of Coleorton and the Locality"** by Samuel T Stewart.



The above photograph partly showing the Woolrooms, was taken from outside the former family home of the author in Stoney Lane, Coleorton in 1947. The old "New Lount Pit" banks can be seen on the horizon. These were commonly known by the miners and locals as "Sabrina Pass" for obvious reasons.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE PLACES RECORDED IN THE FOLLOWING TEXT ARE MARKED WITH LETTERS ON THE MAP FEATURED ON THE FRONT COVER.

The cottage on the extreme left (**A**), which was thatched at one time, and rented from the Beaumont Estate, was probably no more than a tiny two up and two down at the time it was occupied in the mid 1800's by Thomas Bird, who was commonly known as Thomas Richards. He had been christened twice and Bird was actually his officially recorded surname. Thomas Bird, a pit deputy, was drowned at the age of 41 in 1863 when the No.2. Coleorton Colliery (known as the Califat) was flooded, leaving his wife and their **10** children destitute over night. Along with other neighbours, the local butcher by the name of Simeon Stacey came to their aid. He lived directly across the dirt track from the Richards house in a thatched cottage. Simeon supplied the family with bones, from which along with vegetables, provided by other friends, they could make broth. In this hand to mouth way, the children survived, until they were old enough to earn an income.

In 1906, William and Emma Benson (nee Fairbrother) moved into the former Richard's cottage, with their only son William aged seven. He was always known as Billy Benson. They had previously lived in a small cottage in Ashby Road, Newbold. William died c.1916, and Emma and her son Billy continued to live in the cottage. Billy subsequently purchased the cottage from the Beaumont Estate and married Constance Edith Fowkes in 1921. They had one son, James Leonard, and two daughters, Constance Evelyn and Rosemary. Billy Benson was one of the

stalwarts at the Coleorton Primitive Methodist Chapel and was a Sunday school teacher also, having taught the author for many years.



Billy Benson



Bill's mother, Emma Benson

The next cottage in the photograph, facing end on to Benson's (**B**), was owned by Freddie Martin and his wife c.1940, where they raised two daughters. The aforementioned Simeon Stacey's thatched cottage and slaughterhouse etc, was in fact adjoining this before it was demolished c.1930. Freddie purchased what were then two semi-detached cottages as a block from the Beaumont Estate. Prior to Freddie buying them, there were originally three cottages but Lill and George Turner made the first two into one, and Tommy Turner and his wife lived in the other.

In the early 1900's, the cottage on the extreme right of the photograph (**C**), which was also thatched at that time, was occupied by Isaac Fox, but in 1918, Frederick Barkby and his wife Mary moved there after their marriage at St. Mary's Church, Coleorton. Fred and Mary had a daughter Margaret there, before moving to Stoney Lane. Margaret was the mother of the author's wife. At one time, Frederick was a carpenter and Medical Officer at Coleorton Number 1 Colliery (known as the "Bug and Wink"), and was responsible for accompanying injured people to hospital in the ambulance. In 1913, he was a member of the Snibston Colliery No.1 rescue team. He is on the right hand side of the photograph below.



Frederick Barkby
b. 1887
d. 1979

Snibston Colliery No.1 Rescue Team - July 31st 1913



The preceding photograph shows an instructor and team of five men wearing their breathing apparatus and safety goggles and carrying flame safety lamps. In the foreground can be seen other items of rescue equipment including a stretcher and ropes. Normally a caged canary would have been part of their equipment as well. The mine rescue team became a legal requirement for all collieries in the Coal Mines Act of 1911. The teams were made up of volunteers chosen for their physical fitness and experience underground. Rescue stations and teams like the one at Snibston, had to be within 10 miles of collieries to ensure a fast response to any accidents or emergencies. The rescue teams rarely found any survivors in the event of underground explosions or fires. "Afterdamp" immediately poisoned the air after a mine explosion or fire and regularly claimed the lives of miners who were nearby.

After Frederick and Mary left the cottage in the Woolrooms, it was then occupied by Lill and Joseph Smith. They had a son James Arthur Jnr. After Joseph died, his wife Lill went as housekeeper to Joe Mee (brother of the Peggs Green / Swannington Blacksmith, Edgar Mee). The cottage was then occupied by their son James Arthur Smith and his wife Mabel Gladys, who raised two children, Steven and Jennifer there. The garden to this property was across the dirt track at that time where a modern property now stands (see map).



Joseph & Lillian Smith



**James Arthur Smith & his wife
Mabel Gladys in army uniforms**

Adjoining this garden, was another garden plot belonging to Brown's cottage described later, this had its own pig sty which can be seen on the map.

Across the yard from the cottage on the extreme right of the photograph, was a small single story residence (**D**) where William Fairbrothers and his family lived. This consisted of a Living Room, Kitchen, Pantry, one Bedroom and the usual domestic offices, as recorded below in the Beaumont sale. A brick causey ran along the front of their house, which Mrs Fairbrother used to regularly scrub. **The Fairbrothers had 11 children in this tiny cottage - quite amazing!**

In the centre of the common yard which ran between the two buildings, was a bake house (**E**) as described in the following documents from the Beaumont Estate sale in 1920. The author believes, from the size, that this would have been what was also known as a bread oven, similar to the one on Aqueduct Lane as described in a separate dedicated article. This was described by Margaret Barkby as being in use c. 1930.

“Wells” were sunk in strategic places and these were the only means for the community to obtain their water. A well is described under Lot 6A, but it is made clear that this was a communal well to be enjoyed by other properties in the neighbourhood. There was another well at the property marked J.

LOT 6 A.
(Coloured Pink on Plan.)

A Cottage and Garden

Let to Mrs. Wm. Fairbrother containing Living Room, Kitchen, Pantry, 1 Bedroom, and the usual Domestic Offices.

NOTE.—There is a Bakehouse and Well in the Yard common to the Two Houses, Lots 6 and 6a, and to other properties in the neighbourhood that have hitherto enjoyed the right of user.

PROPERTY D

LOT 6.
(Coloured Pink on Plan and numbered Part 632 and Part 629.)

A Messuage and Garden

Situate in the Woolrooms, and now in the occupation of Mr. F. Barkby.

THE MESSUAGE contains Living Room, Pantry, Wash-house, Coalplace, 3 Bedrooms.

THE OUTBUILDINGS comprise a Stable and the usual Domestic Offices.

There is a small Garden.

PROPERTY C

Further down the yard from Fairbrother's cottage, was another two story cottage (**F**) where Aggie (Agnes) Wardle lived. Later on, in the mid 1900's, Freddie Brown and his wife lived there, where they raised two children Betty and Jeffrey. Their separate garden was also across the dirt track leading to Aqueduct Lane. At this time, there were no made up roads in the Woolrooms, just compacted dirt tracks.

At the end of the yard, was a pair of semi-detached two storey cottages (**G**). In 1900, Thomas Lord and his wife Margaret (nee. Barkby) lived in the left hand one of the pair, and rented out the other. At one time, Mousie and Minnie Stinson lived in the adjoining cottage, before they moved to live in Chapel lane, adjacent to the Coleorton Primitive Methodist Sunday School (the old Methodist Chapel). Thomas and Margaret raised three children there (Robert, Eunice and Alec).

Thomas was tragically killed in an accident at Coleorton Colliery (Bug and Wink), on the 19th of August 1911 at the age of 32, leaving Margaret widowed with her three young children. This sad event had aroused much public sympathy, the deceased being so well known. A large number of people attended the funeral as a last mark of respect.

A copy of the Coalville Times newspaper report and a report on the accident are appended.

Thomas was a member of the "Coleorton Beaumont Cricket Club", and he can be seen in the appended photograph of the team.

Thomas Lord, his brother Nathan and his cousin Samuel Matchett were all killed at the Bug and Wink. **Thomas and Margaret Lord (Nee Barkby) & sister to Frederick Barkby (property C), were the great Aunt and Uncle of the author's wife, Sheila (nee Bannister)**



Margaret Lord (nee Barkby)



Thomas Lord

An official accident report on the death of Thomas Lord which appeared in the Coalville Times :-

At the time of the accident, Thomas was working as a "Stallman", and the colliery was owned by Checkland and Co. Thomas was ripping in the gate road, five or six yards from the coal face, when, without previous warning, a part of the roof which was two to three feet wide and two feet thick, fell from two unseen converging slips, killing him instantly.

**Fatality at
Coleorton Colliery**

100 YEARS AGO - 1911

THE funeral took place at Coleorton on Saturday afternoon of Mr Thomas Lord, the unfortunate young man who was killed in the Coleorton Colliery on the previous Tuesday.

The sad event had aroused much public sympathy, deceased being so well-known, and a large number of people attended the funeral as a last mark of respect.

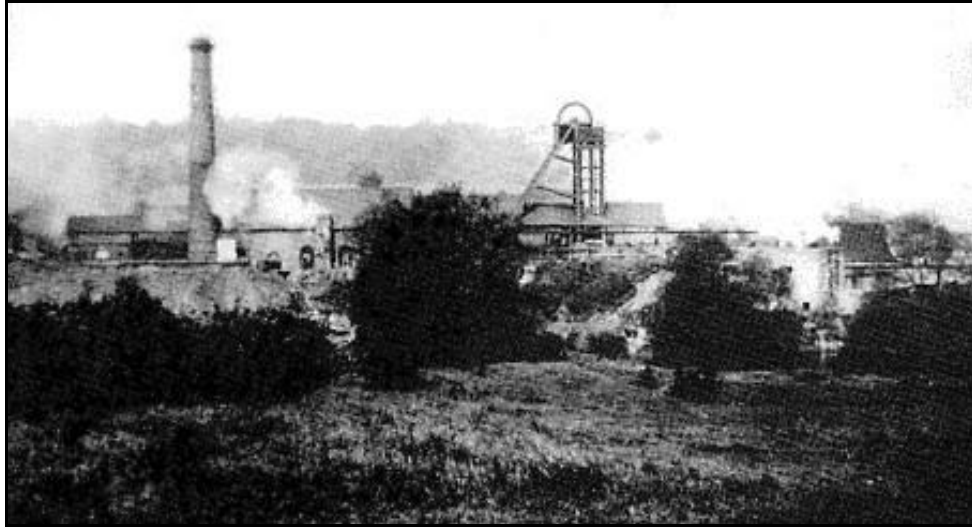
The service was conducted by the Rector the Rev Harold Robinson, the first portion being in the parish church, and at the close, the hymn

"Thy will be done" was sung. The chief mourners were deceased wife, daughter and two sons. Mrs James Lord (mother), Mr and Mrs Barkby (father in law and mother in law), Mr James Lord (brother) and Mrs Lord, Mr John Lord (brother), Mr Nathan Lord (brother) and Mrs Lord, Mrs Harding, of Leicester, Mrs Matchett, Elizabeth, Florence and Maria (sisters), Mr T Matchett, Mrs S Shakespear, of Shirebrook, E Barkby (sister in law) and other relatives.

An official accident report on the death of Nathan Lord, who was brother to Thomas above :-

Nathan Lord who worked as a "Stallman" was killed on Apr 25th 1912 - "The deceased was travelling along the endless rope haulage road to his work, and, when nearing the end of it, a large stone displaced a stretcher and fell upon him from a height of 7 feet, and killed him. The rail track had been lifted several feet so that the roadway was in solid stone. Some coal was being worked some distance away, and there was a slight movement in the strata.

Samuel Matchett was killed on the 18th December 1918.



**Coleorton No.3. Colliery 1875 - 1933
(known locally as the "Bug and Wink")
Photograph taken in early 1900's**



Coleorton Beaumont Cricket Club 1904

The preceding photograph, sporting a team of gentlemanly looking players, was taken in 1904 with their president Sir G. A. H. Beaumont in the centre of the front row. Two Charville family members were in the team, John V. Charville Sen'r (Beaumont Arms pub landlord) who was treasurer, and his son John T. R. Charville. Kelly's 1916 Directory for Leics and Rutland records JTR. Charville as Hon Sec. However, other records show T. Williams as **Senior Honorary Secretary**.

Details of the unfortunate death of Mr Thomas Lord (second from left on back row) is included in the preceding feature.

The names are, from left to right:-

Back Row: J. Robinson, T Lord, T Williams, J Williams, W Lord, JTR Charville Jn'r, J Ward, J V (Peck) Charville Sn'r, J Williams Sn'r.

Middle Row: J Williams, Thomas Williams, Sir GAH Beaumont, G Haywood, J Rice, E E Massey.

Front Row: G Kinns, J Haywood.

Margaret and Thomas's son, Robert Lord, eventually moved into the right hand cottage, and later purchased Fairbrother's small house, to use as a garage for his car. At that time, not many people had cars of course. Robert was an entrepreneurial gentleman, who made radio sets, repaired TV's, installed electrical wiring in houses, kept bee hives, and produced honey for sale. He also had a spell of selling white pottery around the district in his van.

Five generations of Lords have lived in these cottages, including the present owner Malcolm Lord, who reports that a cannon ball was found on his land during excavations he had carried out. Presumably this was a relic from the civil war. Malcolm has kindly renovated and preserved Charlie Marson's (**the Coleorton master nailmaker**) nail shop and forge building in the adjacent field. Charlie was the maternal great grandfather of the author.



A photograph taken in 1988 of Charlie Marson's old Nail Shop and Forge

Another cottage attached to the rear of (F), stood in the field facing the brook. In the mid 1900's, these were occupied by the Tugby family (H) but were later replaced by a new build.

There were no other houses in the Woolrooms at this time, except for one detached house and small holding (J) on the right hand side, where the track through the Woolrooms met Aqueduct Lane. Prior to the Beaumont Estate sale in 1920, this was occupied by Mr. Frank Bailey and Mr. Robert Fairbrother. In the 1920 sale, this property and small holding, consisting of 4.793 acres, was purchased by William and Eunice Palmer (nee. Lord). The property was later owned by Eunice Palmers brother Alec Lord and his wife Lizzie, after William and Eunice Palmer built a bungalow further along Aqueduct Road towards the Coleorton Railway Bridge. A new house is now sited on the plot.

MAINS WATER SUPPLY TO THE WOOLROOMS

The Woolrooms didn't get its own mains water supply till the 1960's when Robert Lord organized a pipe to be laid from Stoney Lane, up to a small brick building opposite the gate to Martin's cottage. This housed a single brass tap from which the residents had to fetch their water in a bucket.