



NEWSLETTER April 2020

Obviously there will be no meeting in April and it is also unlikely that there will be one in May so this is a different *Newsletter*. I hope you are keeping well and surviving life indoors. What have I been doing? Well I started to find out about the Jackson family.

Like most people I was aware that the Clay Cross Company was founded by George Stephenson and the name Jackson was connected with the company. Being a cricket fan I was aware that Guy Jackson was the captain of the Derbyshire team in the 1920s and, living in Walton, I knew that there was a memorial window in St John's Church to Captain William Brabazon Mather Jackson who was killed in WWI. I wondered if there was a connection between these facts; research revealed what a remarkable family the Jacksons were in the nineteenth century.

William Jackson (1805-1876) was the seventh of the eleven children of Peter Jackson and his wife née Sarah Mather. Money was short and William found work in the office of a merchant in Liverpool who later went bankrupt. William was kept on in the counting house for a year and took the opportunity to read *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from beginning to end. He was then apprenticed to an ironmonger before leaving to start trading eventually to all parts of the world using the information about countries that he had learned from the *Encyclopaedia*. He was largely instrumental in the development of Birkenhead and his friendship with Joseph Paxton led to the development of Birkenhead Park. He was also friendly with George Stephenson and Thomas Brassey which is probably how he came to be involved in the Clay Cross Company the first board of directors of which consisted of George and Robert Stephenson, George Carr, Sir Joshua Walmsley and Sir William Jackson J.P. Financial backers included Sir Samuel Morgan Peto, M. P. and E. L. Betts. Gradually Sir William acquired the rest of the shares in the company until he was the sole shareholder. He was seen as an enlightened employer.

Jackson, Peto, and Betts together with Thomas Brassey were the contractors for the Grand Junction Railway in Canada work on which started in 1852 and which involved Jackson surveying the line across Canada on foot or by horse leaving behind a wife and nine growing children. Another son Thomas Hughes Jackson accompanied him. William was also responsible for the construction of railways in Italy.

A Liberal he was M.P. for Newcastle under Lyne from 1845-65 and North Derbyshire 1865-1868. Shortly afterwards his health began to deteriorate and he died in 1876.

He was succeeded by his eldest son Henry who became a barrister. Henry had three daughters and three sons, the youngest of whom was William Birkenhead Mather Jackson (1864-1934) who became a mining engineer. He moved to Derbyshire living in turn at The Hall, Clay Cross, Ringwood Hall and moved into Walton Lodge in 1911. His two sons were in the Sherwood Foresters when war broke out. In 1917 the younger son Christopher was wounded for the third time. His parents travelled to London in the hope that they might be able to visit him but whilst they were there they received news that their elder son Captain William Brabazon Mather had been killed in action. A memorial window was unveiled in St John's Church Walton in 1918.

Their father William Birkenhead became the general manager and then managing director of the Sheepbridge Coal and Iron Company and he made his home at Glapwell Hall. His wife died in 1932 and William became very depressed. He was found drowned in a pond at the Hall in 1934.

After Thomas Hughes Jackson (1834-1930) returned from Canada he embarked on a Grand Tour paid for by his father. Aboard the Indiaman the *Sutlej* (certainly not a luxury cruise) he sailed south to South Africa, where he met native tribesmen, then north east to Ceylon, Singapore and China (where he helped put down an insurrection at Canton), Hong Kong, Penang (where he hunted snipe on a nutmeg plantation), India (where he helped put down a mutiny), Indonesia (where he played billiards with the Javanese emperor), Australia (where he panned for gold) across the Pacific to Callao in Peru, to Valparaiso. From there he crossed the Andes to Rio de Janeiro from where he set sail for England. His poor mother must have wondered if she would ever see him again.

Thomas married Hermine Meinertzhagen in 1862. Like his father, Thomas was closely involved with Birkenhead and he moved to Cloughton Manor overlooking Birkenhead Park which his father had built. He was mayor of Birkenhead and chairman of the Liverpool Steamship Owners Association.

They had eleven children; their eldest son was Frederick Huth Jackson. Hermine was the daughter of Daniel Meinertzhagen a German merchant who had settled in London; his wife Amelia was the daughter of another German, Frederick Huth, who had anglicized his name when he settled in London and founded the merchant bank Frederick Huth. Unsurprisingly Frederick Huth Jackson joined the bank. He also became a director of the Bank of England, the High Sheriff of the County of London in 1918-1919 and a member of the Privy Council.

Thomas became chairman of the Clay Cross Coal and Iron Company following the death of Henry Mather Jackson. His younger brother John Peter Jackson was manager of the company until he died in 1901. In 1891 two of his nephews William and Geoffrey were living with their uncle John Peter Jackson at Stubben Edge in Ashover. It is not clear if William was the son of Thomas or Henry: possibly the latter as in 1908 board of directors included Geoffrey who was manager of Clay Cross Company and William who was director of Sheepbridge Coal and iron Company.

Like his cousin William, Geoffrey had two sons who fought in WWI. William Brabazon Mather Jackson had been killed on 9 April 1917 and shortly afterwards on 28 April Geoffrey's son Geoffrey Laird Jackson of the Rifle Brigade died. Geoffrey's surviving son was Guy Rolf who joined the Derbyshire Yeomanry and served in Salonika where he won the Military Cross, the Legion of Honour and the Greek Military Cross and whilst leading a patrol received a flag of truce from some Bulgarian soldiers which marked the end of the war for the Bulgarians.

After the war he made his debut for Derbyshire County Cricket Club in 1919; captained the side from 1921-1930 and retired in 1936 the year that Derbyshire won the championship. His brother Geoffrey had played for the side in 1914 and his cousin Anthony Henry Mather Jackson played between 1920 and 1927.

Guy ran the company with his brother Humphrey. Geoffrey died in 1966 and the company became a public company and Humphrey died in 1969. In 1974 the company was bought by Ready Mix Concrete and the last remaining member of the Jackson family on the board, John Jackson, retired ending 120 years association of the Jacksons and the company.

So yes the facts I started with were connected and I found some remarkable characters on the way, particularly Thomas Hughes Jackson who died in 1930, having driven an engine at the official opening of the Ashover Light railway in 1925 at the age of 91.

If anyone is interested there is lots more about the family online. It makes a change from watching TV, gardening or even worse – housework!!