

A HOUSE AND ITS PEOPLE - 39 HIGH STREET (PART TWO)

By Pat Perkins



In the last edition of the Historian (No. 27) Pat Perkins traced the history of 39, High Street and the people who lived there. Part one finished at the beginning of the 20th century and in part two she continues the story of this fascinating building up to the present day.

The Flint family had purchased 39, High Street in 1860 as well as running a wine merchant business, also based on the High Street. The family owned considerable property in the town including the Angel Hotel, the Red Cow, The Admiral Nelson and The Sun Inn public houses. When James Flint died his eldest son William inherited 39, High Street and being a good Catholic sent his daughters away to be educated at a convent school.

On the death of his uncle Edward, who owned much of the family property, William had to mortgage his house to buy his uncle's share of the business in October 1905. He borrowed the money from Edith Adderly widow of William Asgar Adderly, who ran the Daisy Bank pottery in Longton, and from John Adderly who ran the Sampson Smith pottery also in Longton. He put most of the properties up for sale but bought back the Malthouse on the corner of Fairfield Road, The Angel, and the Wine business based at 36 High Street. William continued to run these businesses until 1926, when he retired, and around 1930 he finally moved to Shropshire.



SAMPLES OF THE CHINA THAT WAS PRODUCED BY THE ADDERLEY POTTERIES.
ON THE LEFT DAISY BANK AND ON THE RIGHT SAMPSON SMITH.

The Improvement of the High Street

The High Street was considerably improved in 1884 by the building of the sewer system through the town. Although an excellent development it caused some problems. When the toilet was used a bucket of water had to be put down to make it flush through the system. Many people did not bother to do this, so on very hot occasions they had to put disinfected material in the top of the sewers to stop the smell. Today we take flush toilets for granted, but for many, having moved from using the old ash closets at the bottom of the garden, this new development took some adjusting to. In addition not all houses were on tap water supply, so this may have meant carrying water from the pumps to the toilet.

This 1902 photograph (from the library collection) shows the constant problem that all the women must have faced with a home at the top end of the High Street. There are several reports of cattle actually walking down the pavement, which of course must have meant that dirt would have been brought into the house. Housewives must have despaired at the amount of cleaning this caused. The opening of the new cattle market in 1903 (now Sainsbury's car park) must have been greatly welcomed by those who lived and worked in the High Street. Note the posts outside the doors, supposedly to stop the cattle entering premises by means of a chain link fence.



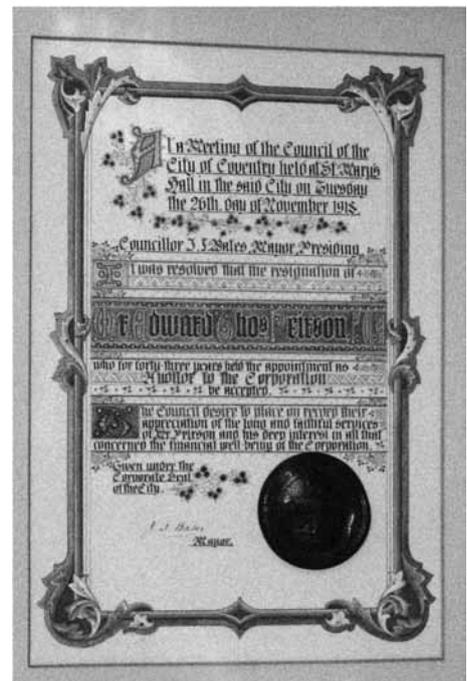
THE HIGH STREET MARKET HARBOURGH 1902

The Barrett Family

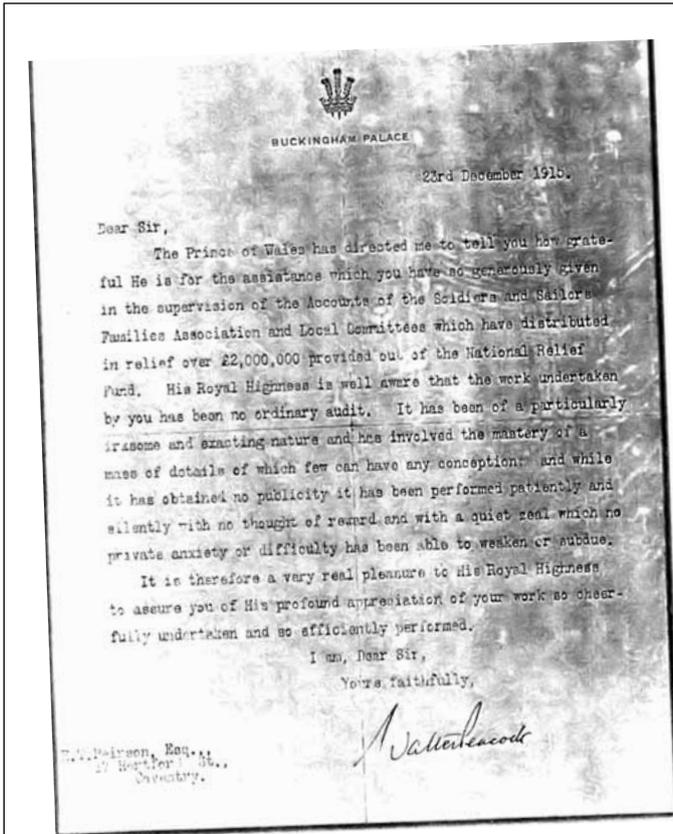
39, High Street changed hands once again in the 1920s when Edward Valentine (Guy) Barrett bought it for his wife Elizabeth Mary Primrose (Tallis). Guy was a steel works manager from Ebbw Vale, and his father was Oscar Barrett the theatre manager of the Lyric Theatre in London. His Cinderella was famous. His wife was the daughter of John Fox Tallis mineral agent and mining engineer of Ebbw Vale Co. Ltd. Guy travelled to New York between September and December 1919, and he was registered on the passenger list as a works manager living in Ebbw Vale. Guy Barrett was also connected with a foundry and engineering works based in Lutterworth. Their eldest son John Oscar Guy Barrett a radio engineer, married Antoinette Schopp at Little Bowden church in 1937. By 1944 Elizabeth had redeemed the mortgage for 39, High Street from the building society. They appeared to have moved from the town shortly after this eventually moving to Tasmania appearing on the voting list there in 1954.

Edward Thomas Peirson and Sons

In 1944 the business Edward Thomas Peirson & Sons occupied the building and remained there until 2007. Their previous offices were at 44 and 45 High Street. Edward Thomas Peirson the founder of the company had moved from London to Coventry where he set up his business in 1860 at the age of 21. His sons and grandsons were to eventually follow him into accountancy. Edward was a member of the Accountants Society in 1872 which, with other groups, formed the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales in 1879. He also became a member of its committee. He was appointed Official Receiver to the Coventry area and dealt with many difficult cases, for example the collapse of a bank, and locally was involved in the decision to complete the Hinckley Waterworks which was under financial threat. He insisted on climbing a tower to see how work was progressing and from this observation decided that it was more advantageous to have it completed. He was appointed in 1879 as accountant to Friendly Societies, which meant he could audit the early Building Society Accountants. He was also accountant to Coventry City Council for over 20 years.



THIS CERTIFICATE WAS PRESENTED TO EDWARD PEIRSON FOR HIS SERVICES TO COVENTRY COUNCIL



ORIGINAL LETTER

Buckingham Palace
23rd December 1915

Dear Sir,

The Prince of Wales has directed me to tell you how grateful He is for the assistance which you have so generously given in the supervision of the Account of the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association and the Local Committees which have distributed in relief over £2,000,000 provided out of the National Relief Fund. His Royal Highness is well aware that the work undertaken by you has been no ordinary audit. It has been of a particularly irksome and exacting nature and has involved the mastery of a mass of details of which few can have any conception and while it has obtained no publicity it has been performed patiently and silently with no thought of reward and with quiet zeal which no private anxiety or difficulty has been able to weaken or subdue.

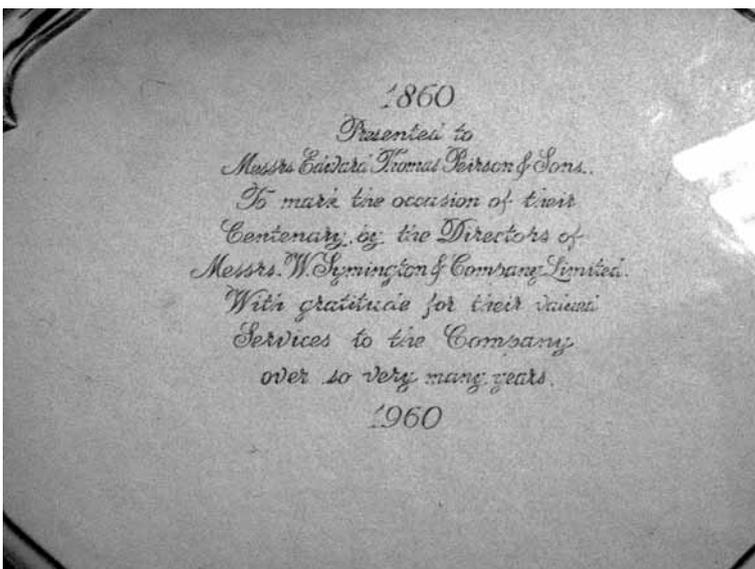
It is therefore a very real pleasure to His Royal Highness to assure you of His profound appreciation of our work so cheerfully undertaken and so efficiently performed.

I am, Dear Sir,
Yours faithfully
Walter Peacock

E.T. Peirson Esq.,
17 Hertford Street, Coventry

TRANSCRIPT

AN EXAMPLE OF THE ADDITIONAL DUTIES HE PERFORMED IS INDICATED BY THIS THANK YOU LETTER FROM THE PRINCE OF WALES FOR HIS WORK IN DEALING WITH THE ACCOUNTS OF THE SOLDIERS AND SAILORS FAMILIES ASSOCIATION.



PRESENTATION MARKING THE CENTENARY OF THE BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEIRSON & SONS AND THE SYMINGTON COMPANY 1860 - 1960

Edward Peirson was an acquaintance of Samuel Symington, the son of William Symington founder of Symington Coffee Mills. The Peirson firm were accountants to Symingtons but probably Edward and William developed a closer relationship as they were both important leaders in the Temperance Movement in the late 19th century. In 1960 Edward Thomas Peirson and Sons were to celebrate 100 years as accountants to William Symington. When Samuel Symington died in 1909 Mr Peirson was amongst the chief mourners and when Mr Howard Symington died Messrs S and K Peirson were also present as important mourners.

In 1888 Peirson and Sons was appointed auditors to Market Harborough Building Society and carried out these duties for many years. The Symington's and William Flint were on the board of the Building Society.

For many years members of the Peirson family were based in Coventry and they would come to Market Harborough for important meetings. Eventually the company in Coventry was merged with other accountants to form larger firms, so that by the 1970s Edward Thomas Peirson and Sons of Market Harborough became the firm we know today.

The Harborough office has seen many changes not least the coming of computers. A very large machine being the first of the type, made the floor rattle every time it was operated, the floors were uneven to the extent that every time you opened a drawer you had to be careful that one of the others didn't slide open too and make the cabinet unstable. One of my favourite characters was an old farmer who on Tuesday (which was then market day) knew that if he came into the office at 3.30 he would be given tea and biscuits. In summer we would buy ice creams from the shop on the corner of Bowden Lane, which was run by two elderly ladies. This was demolished when the flats were built. We would stand at the windows on the first floor to watch Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals taking place at the Congregational Church across the road some very large weddings and important funerals. The streaker running down the High Street, the big lorries getting stuck through the pinch points and then having to manoeuvre into Bowden Lane. Over the years many people have worked within the walls of 39, young men and women who have gone onto to be qualified accountants, got married, had children and had other careers.

They will all have memories of working within the building; climbing the two flights of stairs to the top floor, the room under the stairs which served as tearoom at one time and the ladies toilet at others. On occasions this had a tendency to flood as it was below ground level which of course led to plenty of mopping out. Checking the cellar after heavy rain, reminded me of the 1872 story of the water running down the full width of the High Street from the Union Inn and past the Folly Pond which apparently overflowed its banks, to the High Street flooding cellars and underground kitchens all the way to the Square. In fact someone on their way home from the market was drowned.

In winter it could be cold but in summer with the sun shining on the back of the building into the offices though we used to complain and have to draw the blinds, it was lovely to sunbathe in this enclosed area.

Today Peirsons is located at The Point on Rockingham Road and 39 High Street is incorporated into Fisher German's premises.



THE ENCLOSED AREA AT THE REAR OF 39 HIGH STREET WHERE PAT AND HER COLLEAGUES ENJOYED SOME FRESH AIR AND SUN DURING THEIR BREAK TIME.