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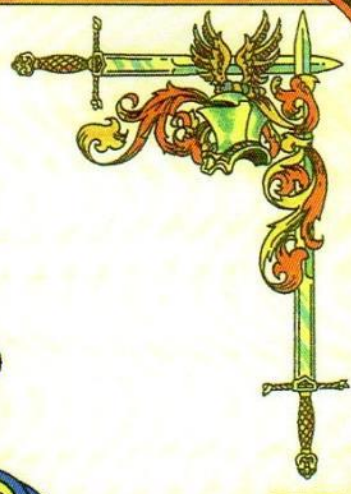
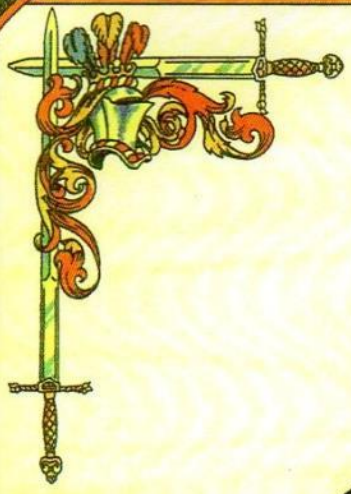
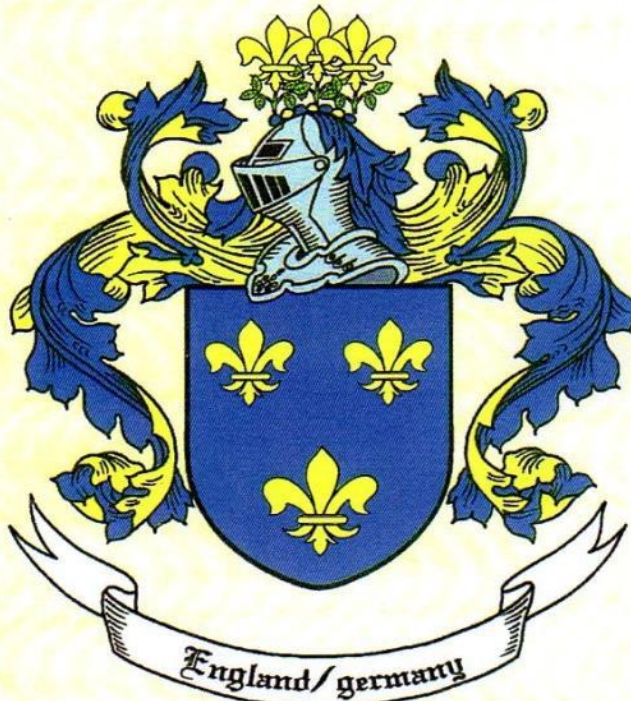
THE WEAVERS FAMILY



1866 - 1943

Family Name History

Weaver



The English surname Weaver is of occupational origin, being one of those names that was descriptive of the type of work a man did or the profession he pursued. During the Middle-Ages when the system of surnames first evolved, it was inevitable that occupations, which involve such a large portion of a persons time, should be used in the new system of identification. In this case, the name simply means "one who was a weaver".

Weaving is the art of forming a fabric by the interlacing of two or more sets of yarns. It is one of the most ancient of crafts, having been practiced in ancient Egypt and Peru. After the Norman Conquest of 1066, Flemish weavers were brought to England by William the Conqueror and this gave great impetus to the craft. This was about the time that the system of hereditary surnames was being established and it ensured the name Weaver (for men) and Webster (for women) would be well represented in this new system.

The surname Weaver is also found in Germany where we find the name in its German form Weber which derives from the German weben meaning "to weave". Here, indicating a weaver. Records of this surname in England date back to the thirteenth century. An example of this is John le Beurere who was mentioned in the Subsidy Rolls for Sussex in 1296. References for the name Weber or Weaver in Germany can be found as early as the twelfth century. One Cibric Cexber was a resident of Koeln (Cologne) in the year 1139. One Heinrich dicitus Weber was a resident of Basel in the year 1290. One Hanfred Hermann Weber was a preacher in Travemuende and later on in Luebeck, he died in the year 1644.

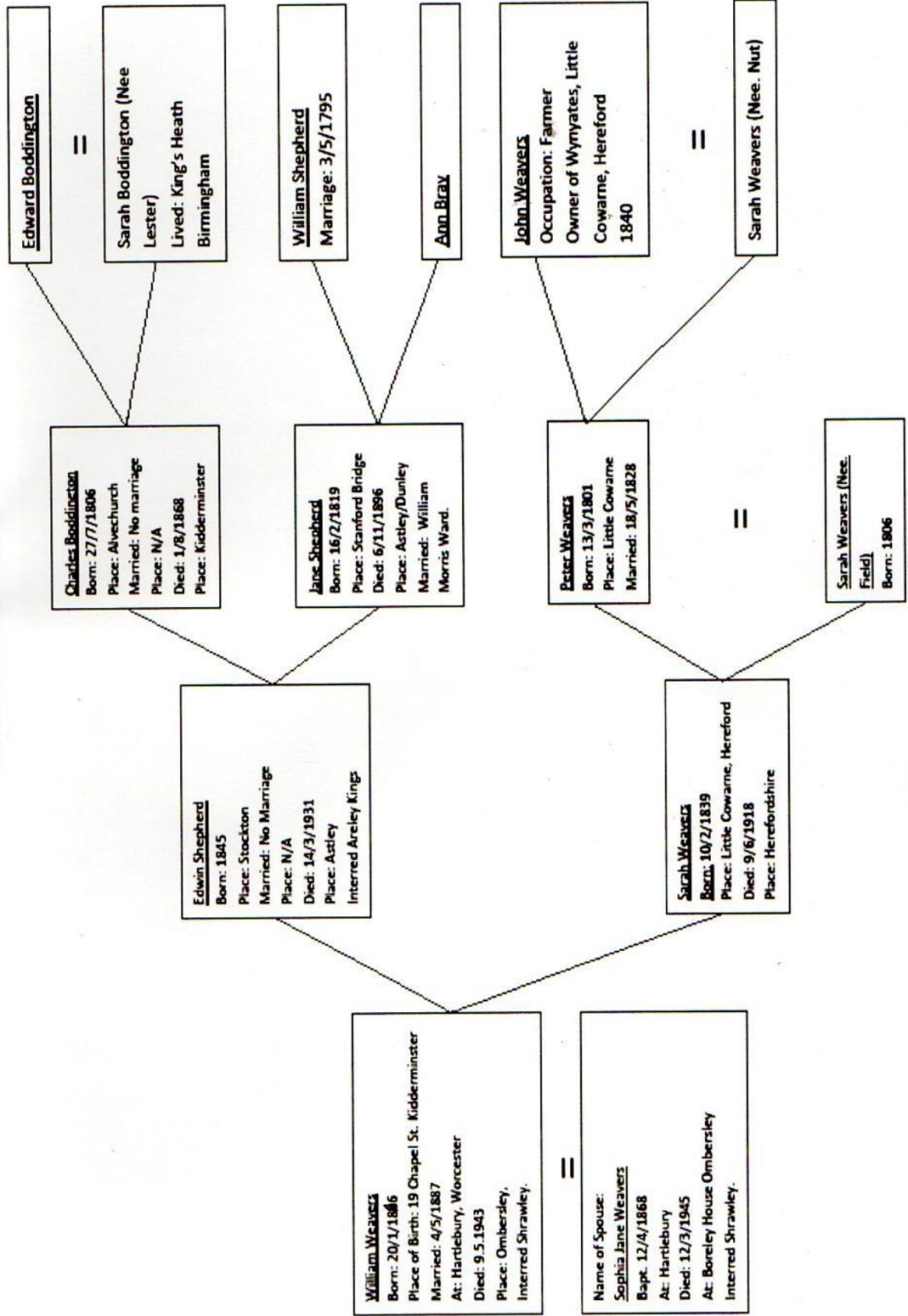
BLAZON OF ARMS: Azure; three (2,1) fleur de lis;
TRANSLATION: Highly regarded as an attribute of royalty, signifies Faith, Wisdom and Valor.

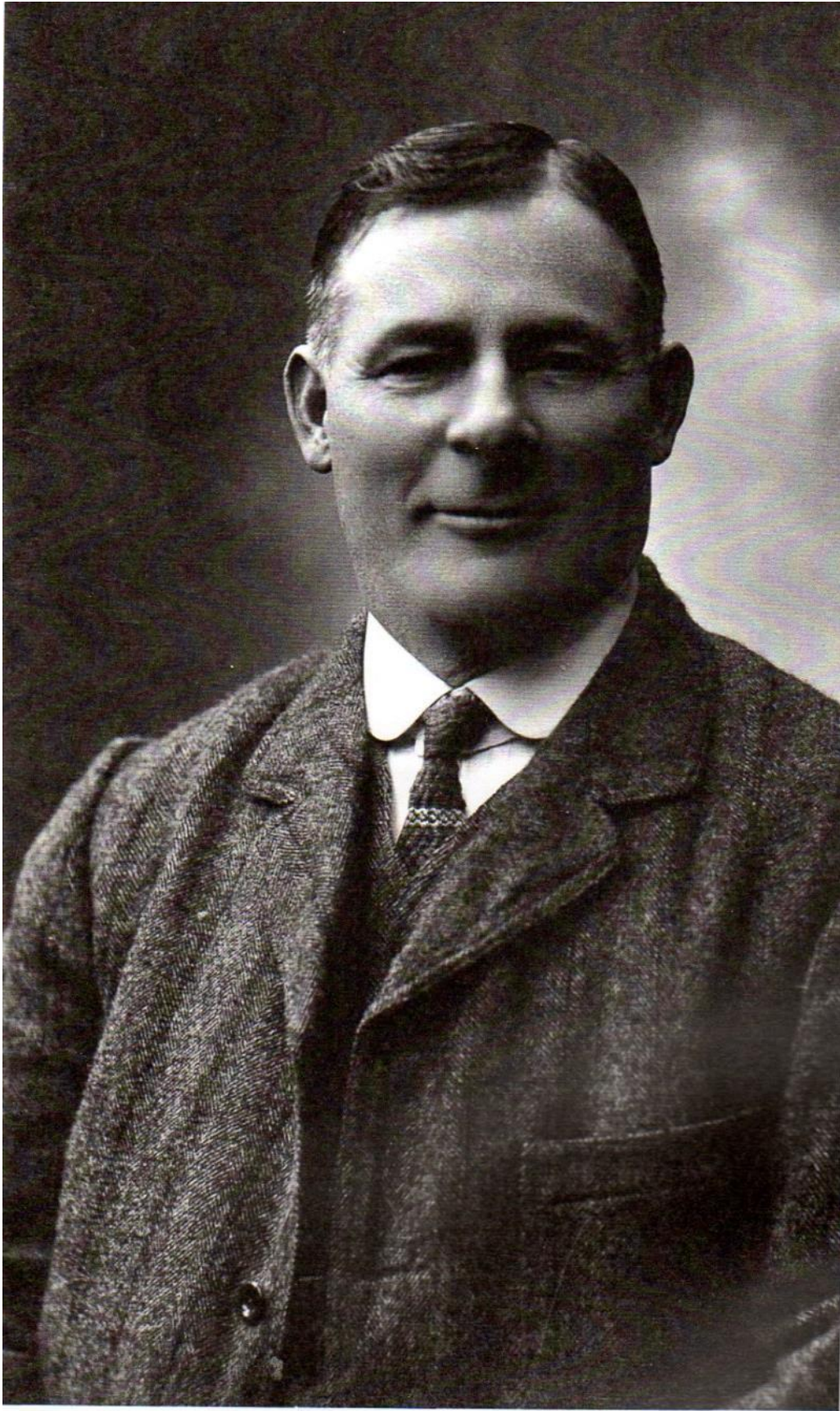
CREST: Three fleur de lis stemmed.

ORIGIN: ENGLAND/GERMANY



William Weavers Ancestral Chart





William Weavers (1866-1943)



Sophia Jane Weavers (1868 – 1945)

Sophia Jane Weavers (1868-1945)

WILLIAM WEAVERS STORY

Chapter 1

William Weavers, born 20th January 1866, the illegitimate son of Sarah Weavers and Edwin Shephard, was to live a chequered life which in his earlier years would read more like a Dickensian novel. Knowledge of his early days is very sketchy, and it would appear that he was moved around quite a lot from one place to another, which he confirmed in later years when he said, "As a child I was kicked about from pillar to post". On the 1901 census William gave his birthplace as Dunley, near Stourport-on-Severn, although the address on his birth certificate is No 19 Chapel Street, Kidderminster.

William's mother, Sarah Weavers, was born in the Herefordshire village of Little Cowarne, near Bromyard, between Jan-Mar 1839. Aged 16, she gave birth to a daughter named Caroline between Jan-Mar 1839. It is uncertain who the father of Caroline was, but when Caroline married she gave the name Joseph William "Weavers" as her father.

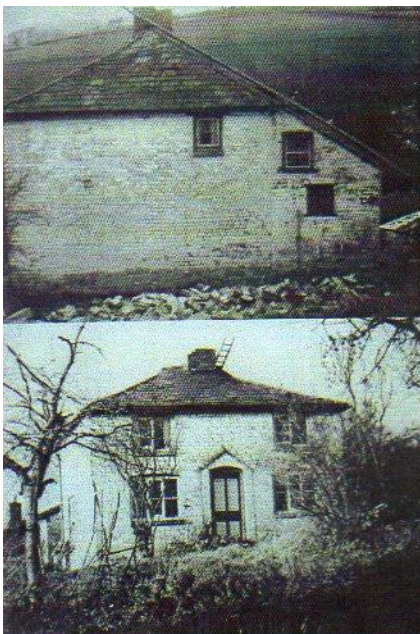
At some point, between the birth of Caroline in 1855 and 1860, Sarah left Caroline with her mother who was also named Sarah and came to Noah's Ark, Dunley, Nr Stourport-on-Severn. This was the home of William Ward and his wife Jane (nee Shephard) the mother of Edwin Shephard who was born, as were his sisters Mary Ann and Emma, before their mother's marriage to William Ward.

Edwin Shepherd : born Jan 1845

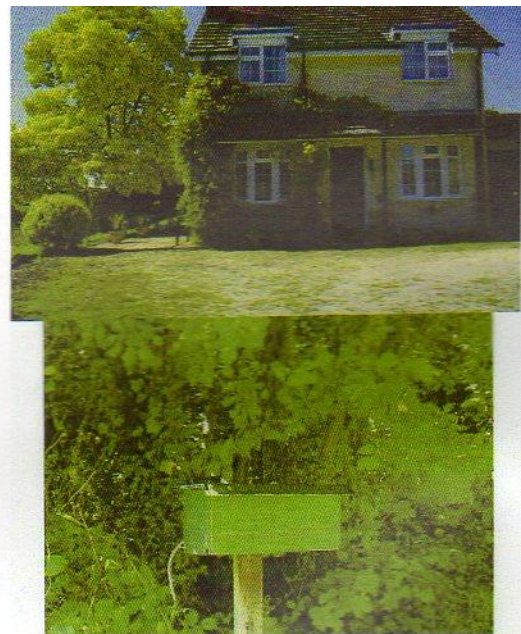
Mary Anne : Born Dec 1842

Emma : born April-June 1841, Baptism 9 May 1841.

Past records show that Charles Boddington of Stockton Court (Edwin and Mary Anne's biological Father) paid William Ward a sum of money to take the two children.



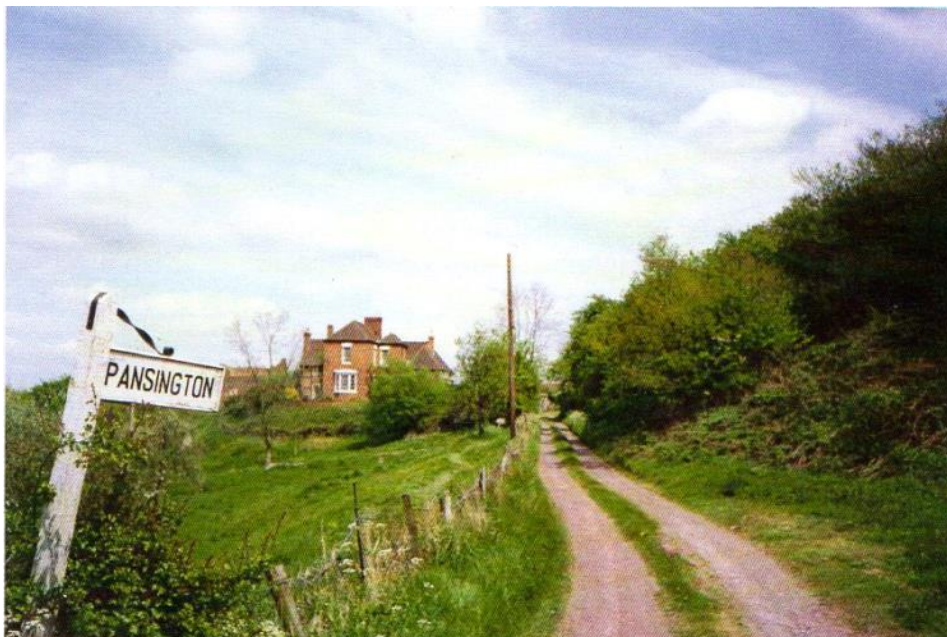
Noah's Ark before restoration



Noah's Ark after restoration

In 1860 Sarah gave birth to another child, a boy named Thomas. As Sarah was still unmarried he was given the surname Weavers. Their address at that time was given as The Waste, Areley Kings (The Waste being a small area which also included Noah's Ark). William's birth followed in 1866. William was never aware of the existence of Sarah's two other children, even though it is almost certain that Thomas was his full brother, and of course Caroline was a half sister.

On the 1871 census, William was listed as living with Samuel Holt (Hoult) and his family at Areley Kings, and his relationship to the head of the household was given as "child to nurse" (a term used quite often when children were farmed out). From then on little is known of his whereabouts until the age of nine when he was taken by his mother to live and work for his uncle James Groves at Pansington Farm, Hartlebury, and that was the last time he had contact with his mother. It is believed that she did visit him once more at Pansington, but it seems he did not want to see her and hid himself away in an apple tree, and although his mother called him, he did not answer.



Pansington Farm

He said that on his twenty first birthday she sent him five pounds with which he bought a cow, and some years later he hired a private detective to try and find his mother, but to no avail. However, with the aid of computers and improvements in accessing the censuses, the writers of this story have been able to track her movements from the time she abandoned William until her death.

While living and working with his uncle James he was not allowed in the house and slept and ate his meals in the barn, with only the dog for company, and his meals were given to him in a bowl similar to the one from which the dog fed. William expressed the fear he felt having to sleep in the barn at that age, but also expressed his relief at being able to sleep close to the dog, as the rats would keep their distance. He also described part of his work, which involved boiling turnips (presumably for animal feed) and using the residual hot water to wash his feet.

Chapter 2

On the 1881 census, William was listed as living at Hay Oak Farm, Abberley Road, Dunley, as a servant to the Dorrell family. It seems as though this period of employment may have been a temporary measure, as he was again to turn up in Hartlebury and because there was a marriage relationship between the Groves and the Dorrells, it seems quite likely that William had been “borrowed” for some seasonal work, a fairly common practice in those days. It was at around this time in his life that the following events took place.

Time has produced two versions of this story and it is uncertain which one is the most accurate, although it did originate from William himself. Part of his employment was delivering milk and watercress door to door. In order to make himself a little extra money he would find a secluded spot near the stream where he would sit down and split the bunches of watercress into two, making himself a penny on the extra bunch. He would then take water from the stream and add it to the milk, making himself a few coppers more. This practice continued for some considerable time, until someone must have realised the milk was not up to standard and one morning, as William was returning to the roadway from the stream, he saw the weights and measures inspector (or whoever it was in those days) waiting for him on the road. To get himself out of trouble he purposefully fell down and upset the two buckets he was carrying, thereby destroying the evidence. This incident took place at Hartlebury, whether it was before or after his term at Hay Oak Farm is unknown.

The second version, although very similar, claims that he was delivering the milk in a horse drawn milk float and when he sighted the weights and measures inspector, or the policeman, whichever it was, he again purposefully overturned the float, and this took place at the bottom of the Windmill Bank at Areley Kings.

A story which he related to his second grandson, Herbert Verity, concerned his trip to the fairground. Having drawn his first week's wages he decided to go to the fair. After spending two hours there he found himself penniless and it was this event which made him vow not to spend his money so randomly again, and no doubt had some bearing on his thrift in subsequent years. Bert said he heard his grandfather say many times “if you spend nineteen shillings and eleven pence out of every pound you handle and save the other penny, you will never be rich, but you will never be poor”.

It was during his teenage years that William bought a horse and cart and contracted to remove scrap from The Anglo in Stourport-on-Severn (a factory that produced enamel ware) and haul it to the tip, which is now known as Birchen Coppice housing estate. Before dumping the scrap, William would sort through it and pick out the best of it (that is to say the least damaged) which he would sell to various people, mainly gypsies, who would sell it on again door to door.

William never attended school and was unable to read or write, although he did have his own mark for the milk account book. It was only when he met his wife to be, Sophia Jane Weaver, that he learned to read and write. It is to be noted that before they were married they shared the name Weaver, except that William's was “Weavers” and Sophia's was “Weaver”. It is not known exactly when they met, but they became engaged and the church records prove that the marriage banns were read on April 10th, 17th and 24th 1887 and they were married at St James' Church, Hartlebury on May 4th of the same year.



William and Sophia on their engagement

On the marriage certificate the name of William's father was given as Edward Shepherd (obviously a misprint as his Christian name was Edwin) this being the first confirmation of whom his father was, but in later years Edwin did acknowledge William as his son.

William made a donation of £100 towards the building of St Mary's Mission Church, Hartlebury. After they were married they went to live at The Sands, Lower Mitton, Stourport-on-Severn where Sophia gave birth to two children.



St Mary's Mission Church, Hartlebury

Date of birth or baptisms and deaths below:

Sarah Annie born 9th June 1889

Died 18th March 1918, interred at St Mary's Church, Shrawley

William John, born 4th September 1890

Died 29th December 1894, interred at Lower Mitton Church, Stourport-on-Severn

Taken From The Kidderminster Shuttle
28th March 1931
"Owd Ned Shepherd"

Last week the SHUTTLE announced the death of Mr Shepherd of Astley.

This week the "Evening Dispatch" gives a picturesque description of the veteran:-

Ned Shepherd is dead! "Owd Ned Shepherd" of Astley, who used to farm near where the salmon leap at Lincomb Weir, who was the father of 29 children, a great Worcestershire character and a friend of Mr Stanley Baldwin.

Ned Shepherd was only 86. He aimed to be a centenarian but, as he told me a few months ago, what with the rheumatics and the cost of living, pains in his "innards" and deprivations, it was not worthwhile to muck about any longer.

"They've took the cider away from me now" he added, spitting with disgust into the roaring kitchen fire. Ned Shepherd lived by cider.

"Never bin wi'out o drop for 50 years" he said.

He drank a tankard of the golden juice of apples for breakfast every morning instead of "tay".

But the cider Ned brewed was no refreshment for tender stomachs.

One "swig of it caused a twitching under the ears, a mug of it made you feel as if your insides had been handed over to ravening beasts".

Twenty of Ned Shepherd's 29 children are alive to mourn him – ten men and ten women. "I'm glad there werna any more", he said with a deep chuckle, "for I conna count any ferder".

Mr Shepherd, as he was addressed by visitors from Birmingham, but not by Mr Baldwin or his farmer intimates, retired from his acres about 15 years ago with 30 prizes for agriculture skill. The prizes included 13 teapots!

He ascribed his uncommon success as a farmer to his specialisation of early crops. He cultivated three farms at one time and always had the earliest wheat stacks in

Worcestershire. "I genally got a shillun a quarter more for ma new July oats than any udder mon" he said "becos they was allus off the grun fust".

Ned was no "scholar". He was 30 when he learned to read and write somewhat. Beginning work as a foundry boy in the works of Mr Stanley Baldwin's grandfather at Stourport, he became in turn a farmer's boy, farmer, brickmaker (at Bewdley) and a farmer at Astley. As a judge of horses and cattle he had few equals.

Tales of Ned's exploits as a farmer, as a bruiser, and as a rare county character are still told in many a Worcestershire alehouse, some of them recall the famous Jack Mytton.

"There beeyunt many chaps like me nowadays" said Ned with a sorrowful shake of his great head. He was sitting in his armchair facing the cottage window through which a lingering ray of November glory fell on his round wrinkled and whiskered face like a benediction.

Ned's dwelling was in the light of the setting suns.

One feeble hand rested on a small safe standing boldly in the inglenook, the other tremblingly fumbled with a "churchwarden" filled with twist, while his great voice boomed and seemed to rattle the willow pattern plates Mrs Shepherd No 2 keeps so tidy on the black oak dresser.

"Mr Baldwin fetched ma an' the missus in 'is own kyar last Christmas" he said, speaking of the annual social gathering of Astley villagers in the parish hall. "E's a rale gennel man, but a shanna goo theer no more".

Ned Shepherd's broken body now lies in Areley Kings churchyard, his soul, it is certain, goes marching on, for he was a brave man, a generous man, a strong man and, in his way, a good man.

"A never fired ma gun on a Sunday" he said.

Chapter 3

William and Sophia then moved to Anchor Farm, Titton, Nr Stourport-on-Severn where Sohia gave birth to five children. Dates of birth or baptisms given below.

Daisy Belle, born 14th 1891, Anchor Farm, Titton, Hartlebury.
Died 19th May 1915, interred at St Mary's Church, Shrawley.

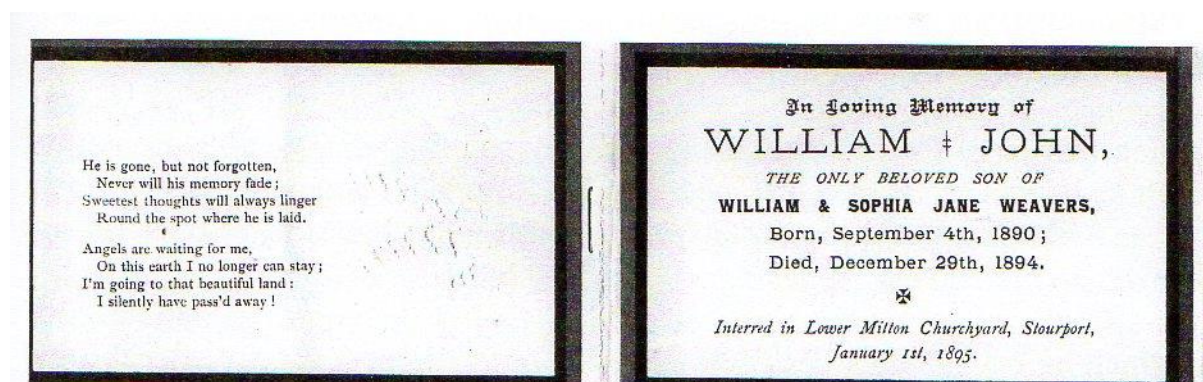
Sophia Jane Helen, born 1892, Anchor Farm, Hartlebury.
Died 1968, interred Astwood Cemetery, Worcester.

Lilley, born 1895, Anchor Farm, Hartlebury.
Died 1st July 1955, interred at St Michael's Church, Stourport-on-Severn.

Harold Sydney, born June 1897, Anchor Farm, Hartlebury.
Died 1958, interred St Michael's Church, Stourport-on-Severn.

Florence May, born 7th May 1898, Anchor Farm, Hartlebury.
Died 8th March 1980, interred at St Mary's Church, Shrawley.

It was while they were living at Anchor Farm they were struck by a tragedy with the death of their firstborn son William John at the tender age of 4 years. Although, it was not unusual to lose children at such an early age in those days, it was none the less tragic and must have been a devastating blow.



Chapter 4

Somewhere between 1898 and 1901 William and Sophia moved to Bull Hill Farm, Astley, Nr Stourport-on-Severn, where they had six more children.

Albert Hanson born 7th January 1903
Died 5th January 1996, interred at Wembley, London.

Arthur Henry born 13th August 1904
Died 25th February 1979, cremated, ashes remain at Astwood Cemetery.

Eric Stanley, born 31st May 1906
Died 1969, interred St Mary's Church, Shrawley.

Walter Jeffrey born 13th May 1908
Died 16th April 1969, interred St Mary's Church, Shrawley.

Doris Amy born 20th May 1909
Died 1st January 1992, interred St Mary's Church, Shrawley

Georgina Mary born 23rd July 1911
Died 1999, interred Kidderminster

Peggy Winifred (adopted daughter)
Born May 21st 1913
Died 8th July 2001, interred Kidderminster.

As well as producing this large family, William had also acquired a considerable amount of land, some of which he bought outright and some he rented from other people. A large amount of this land was in the Kidderminster area, most of which is now developed, but in those days it was all farmland.

The Glebe Farm, which he bought from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners shortly after the end of the first world war, amounted to approximately 100 acres, comprised of a large house, the rifle range, Glebe Cottage, and what is known today as Birchen Coppice housing estate, the same land on which he dumped the scrap metal from The Anglo years before. Glebe Farm House was formerly a rectory, with two large pillars at the front, a tennis court and in the gardens were two large greenhouses, which were later dismantled and taken to Boreley Farm, which tells us that he must have owned the Glebe for a good many years, because he did not buy Boreley Farm until 1932.

The rifle range comprised one third of the whole of Glebe Farm and was rented to the MoD for an annual rent of £25. It would only be used for firing occasionally and the rest of the time it was grazed by William's livestock. The remainder of the land at Glebe Farm was mainly arable. Presumably the Glebe cottage was occupied by a farm worker, or was rented to some other tenant. Because of its glebe land status there was no tithe to pay on any of this property. The Glebe Farm was situated on the side of the main Stourport-on-Severn to Kidderminster road, opposite to where the Sugar Beet Factory stood until a few years ago. The farm was managed by a man named George Shephard, who was William's half brother and, unfortunately hanged himself. The following report was taken from "The Kidderminster Shuttle".

Fatality at Glebe Farm

A Suicide's Poignant Farewell

On Wednesday afternoon of last week, the body of George Shephard, farm bailiff, at the Glebe Farm, Foley Park, Kidderminster, was found hanging in a loft adjoining the farm. From particulars obtained it appears that the wife of the deceased last saw her husband at nine o'clock when she went to work on the land. On her return at dinnertime she found a note in her bag written by her husband giving particulars where his body would be found.

A young man named Williams came to the farm at that moment and he at once went to the loft where he found the deceased hanging. He cut the body down and artificial respiration was resorted to, but without success. Shephard, who was forty years of age, was employed by William Weavers, farmer of Astley.

The Inquest

The inquest was held at Glebe Farm on Friday evening by Mr F.P. Evers, Coroner. Mr W Weavers was present at the inquest.

Mrs Harriet Shephard, wife of the deceased, said her husband, George Shephard, lived at the Glebe Farm, acting as farm bailiff and was aged 49. He had a bad cold at Christmas and had not recovered thoroughly, complaining of pains in his head. He had been worried

a good deal since the loss of his daughter, Lucy, in October, and on Wednesday he had been unusually depressed. He had also worried about the potatoes on the farm which were diseased and frosted, but he had never threatened to commit suicide.

She had been in the potato field in the morning of the 1st and just before one o'clock came back to the house and found her handbag on the table, which she had left on the dresser. She found a letter in the bag, addressed to her, as follows:

February 1st

Dear Wife

I have been worried the last four months, everything has gone the wrong way with me since we lost Lucy and I can't stick it any longer. I hope the lads will look after you, for when you find this I will be gone to rest – at least I hope so.

From your loving husband

G Shephard

You will find me in the loft over the stables, but don't let the boys find me.

Just at that time a young man with Messrs Hingley's lorry came for some potatoes. She gave him the note to read and he at once went to the loft. She had since identified the body as that of her husband.

Arthur Thomas Williams, 360 Long Lane, Blackheath, nr Birmingham, salesman for Messrs. E.P. Hingley, Potato merchants, Blackheath, said he came with the lorry to the Glebe Farm on Wednesday. He came just at one o'clock and shouted "George". Mrs Shephard came to him and gave him a note and he at once went to the loft and saw the deceased hanging by a horse halter from a beam. He cut the body down at once and resorted to artificial respiration which he continued for about ten minutes, but there was no response. He then sent for a doctor and the police. He afterwards assisted to remove the body to the house. The body, when hanging from the beam, was quite three feet above the floor.

Dr V.N. Fenton of Kidderminster said that he was called at about 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday afternoon and saw the body, which was in the loft lying on the floor, fully dressed. He made an examination and saw marks around the neck with some abrasions to the skin. The condition of the body showed the deceased had died from asphyxiation due to hanging. The body was then warm.

William Weaver said that he should like to say that George Shephard had worked for him for thirty years. He had always found him a straightforward and honest man. He had noticed that recently he had been very quiet and queer and from conversations he had had with the deceased he had evidently worried a great deal about the death of his daughter.

The Coroner said the verdict would be that of suicide while temporarily insane. He wished to express his sympathy with the widow and family in their great trial. Mr Weaver also expressed his sincere sympathy with the family.

Chapter 5

Due to their move to Bull Hill Farm, Astley they became close neighbours of Stanley Baldwin, whom William had known for some years, being a fairly active member and supporter of the local branch of the Conservative Party. They became firm friends and remained so until William's death in 1943, well over fifty years.

It was common knowledge in the family circle that Stanley Baldwin was very fond of card playing and in William he had an equal. They would quite often spend an evening together card playing and on a few occasions were known to play quite late into the night. This practice carried on for some years, and it continued when William and Sophia moved to Church Farm at Shrawley, which was only about three miles from Bull Hill. Stanley Baldwin would go to Church Farm for the evening to play cards or to discuss business with William and other members concerning the local branch of the Conservative Party.



Bull Hill House.

People in the
Photograph L to R:
William Weavers
with one of his
young sons.
Oliver Baldwin.
Stanley Baldwin,
Stanley Baldwin's
second son
Arthur Baldwin.

Mr Baldwin lived at Astley Hall on the main Worcester to Stourport-on-Severn road with Bull Hill Farm directly opposite on the other side. William's sons and daughters often talked about their childhood days at Bull Hill and how the Baldwin children would spend their days with them during the school holidays, and would often stay to tea, and in turn the Weavers' children would be invited to tea at Astley Hall.

After Mr Baldwin became Prime Minister, he invited William and Sophia to No 10 Downing Street on several occasions, and once booked tickets and took them to the theatre where they saw a play called "Willy's Wedding". Apparently it was the source of some amusement with William's nickname being "Billy". He had carried this nickname for almost all his life and it was the one Stanley Baldwin always used.

It appears that one of Stanley Baldwin's favourite apples was the Blenheim. Whether he preferred the Green Blenheim or the Orange Blenheim we do not know, but William would

often send him a box to Downing Street. There is proof of this in the hand written notes thanking him.

31. Dec. 1936

10, Downing Street,
Whitehall.

Dear Billy,

That's a very
kind and a most
acceptable present
and I thank you
warmly for it.

The apples are
picked me and eat
well.

Every food wish
to you and yours
for 1937.

Yours sincerely
Stanley Baldwin

William also purchased from his friend and neighbour, Stanley Baldwin, an Allday and Onions car.

As the name suggests Bull Hill was situated at the top of a rather steep hill, and back in the early nineteen hundreds when there was very little motorised traffic and the farming community was heavily dependent on horsepower, an extra horse was needed to assist in drawing heavy loads up the hill. For this reason William would have a horse harnessed in long gears and left in the stable each day in order that anyone needing another horse to pull a load up the steep hill could go directly to the stable and borrow it. It is believed that this free service was used by practically everyone, including timber hauliers. This

increased William's popularity in the community as it reduced the necessity for hauliers to take along their own trace horse and he would undoubtedly have many returned favours.

William rented Bull Hill from Astley Estate, the agent being a man named Edward Gore who lived at Wood Green Farm, Astley. The farm was also rented by William and was not more than a few hundred yards from Bull Hill. It appears that Edward Gore lived in the farmhouse at Wood Green.

A relationship developed between Sara Annie, William's eldest daughter, and Edward Gore, leading to an affair that resulted in the birth of a daughter, Peggy Winifred, on the 21st May 1913. Due to the stigma attached to bearing a child out of wedlock, in those days girls who became pregnant were more often than not sent away to give birth, many of them never to return to their home villages, and Sarah Annie was no exception. She was sent to an address in Bristol Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, the private home of a midwife, where Peggy Winifred was born. Because of this William gave up the tenancy of Bull Hill and Wood Green immediately and he and his family, including daughter Annie and her daughter, moved to Church Farm, Shrawley, one of two farms he rented from Sir George Vernon of Hanbury Hall, Nr Droitwich. Sir George lived at the Woodhouse at Shrawley, and these two farms were part of the Woodhouse Estate, the second farm was Wood Farm, which was also in Shrawley.

Chapter 6

William's married daughter, Sophia Jane Ellen Verity, with her husband and her four children, Vernall, Herbert, Gladys and Christine, occupied Wood Farm.

It was from Bert, the second eldest of the four, that we collected a great deal of our information, due to the fact that he is our eldest living relative and that he and his brother, Vernall, both worked for their grandfather before and after they left school, and up until the commencement of the second world war when Bert joined the RAF.

Vernall continued to work for his grandfather up to the time of William's death in 1943,. The tenancy of the Church Farm included a salmon draught on the River Severn, just north of The Lenchford Hotel, where they were allowed to fish using a boat and nets. After William and Sophia moved to Church Farm tragedy was to strike twice more in the space of three years. Firstly with the death of their daughter Daisy Belle in 1915 aged 20 and again in 1918 with the death of their eldest daughter Annie aged 29. After Annie's death William and Sophia adopted Annie's daughter, Peggy Winifred, who was by this time five years old, and brought her up as their own.



Annie in the Sanatorium

William was a very successful farmer and market gardener. He had a stall on Wolverhampton market from which he sold his produce, and he also supplied a wholesaler named Harry Goodall with whom he became very friendly. Mr Goodall used to visit William and Sophia and was a guest at their golden wedding celebrations held at Boreley Farm in 1937.

In addition to the produce of the market gardening, Sophia produced a good supply of cut flowers from the garden, which were also sold on the stall. It was well known by all who knew him that if there was money to be made from anything, William would spot it. One of his favourite sayings was "The nimble nine pence is far better than the shifty shilling". There was a story handed down concerning a plot of spring cabbage that had gone to seed at Glebe Farm. William had it cut into bunches and sold it on his stall as Siberian Wallflowers. In the spring time of one of his years at Church Farm William had planted a field of corn and was having difficulty keeping the crows away from it. So he decided to make a scarecrow to try and frighten the birds away. Having erected the scarecrow he must have thought it did not look very authentic, so to make it more realistic he removed the smock he was wearing at the time and placed it on the scarecrow. Later that day his son Eric and two of the workmen were walking past the gateway to the field and noticed William's handiwork and the smock it was wearing. Eric, who was always ready with some remark or other said "I bet he has not left any money in the pockets", which prompted one of his companions to walk across and inspect it, and at the same time put his hand in the pockets in order to assure Eric he was right. It must have come as quite a shock to him to find that William had forgotten to remove his money, so he collected what money there was and returned to Eric and his other companion who were waiting at the gate. They could not believe what they were seeing as William was usually very careful of such things. After a few moments Eric decided that they would split the money between the three of them and go to the pub. Whether William ever found out about it or not, no one seemed to know, but knowing Eric I would be willing to bet that those few pints went down very well.

At Church Farm he employed quite a few people who lived in the village of Shrawley. These included the whole of the Bishop family, beginning with Mr. Bishop senior, known by his nickname of "Tuddy", who was a waggoner, his wife who worked in the house and did the washing, his daughter Florence who carried out general domestic duties and his three sons, Sidney, Harry and their brother (name unknown) who were general farm workers. In addition to these he also employed Mrs Cuff who was a needlewoman. She took care of the sewing needs of the whole family and Mrs Downes who was also a general domestic worker.

Farm workers were:

Mr Boucher

Mr Wilfred Harris

Mr Frederick Harris

Mr George Calder

Three brothers, Harry, Robert and Samuel Wood

Mr Caldicott

Mr Medicott

Mr J Moseley

Mr John Cooper

Mr H Saunders

Mr W Downes

Mr E Bradley
Mr J G Prosser
Mr G Wheeler
Mr C Harris
Mr S Ford
Mrs F Wheeler
Mrs E Harris
Mrs E Lines

During WW2 several Italian and German PoW were employed at Church House and Boreley House Farm, and other farms that William farmed. There were some very clever men among these prisoners and with the most primitive of tools they would make toys for the local children as these were, of course, very tightly rationed.

William was very well known around the county for buying growing crops such as peas, cabbage and orchards of fruit, cherries, plums, apples, including cider fruit and Perry pears. Peas, cabbage, soft fruits and dessert apples and pears would be sold both on his stall in Wolverhampton and to the wholesalers.



William at Wolverhampton Retail Market

The Cider apples and Perry pears were shaken from the trees and picked up, mainly by women in those days and were put into sacks and delivered to Bulmer's of Hereford for cider and perry making. In the early part of the 20th century Bulmers would supply farmers with young cider apples and perry pear trees to plant, either in the hedgerows or to establish young orchards,. Many of these trees are still standing today and producing fruit.

William was a very shrewd man and he would go to a farm early in the season, before the trees had started to bloom, and buy all the fruit that the farm would produce, the reason for this being that most farmers on rented farms needed the money at that time of year to pay the half yearly rent. There was one occasion when he went to a sale at Holt Castle Farm where they were selling an orchard of cherries. The orchard was on a very steep bank and William left his car (an Essex four cylinder) at the top of the bank while he went to inspect the orchard. Whether he forgot to put the handbrake on or whether it slipped off the ratchet, no one knew, but his car went freewheeling down the bank and smashed into the cherry trees and was a complete write off. However, William immediately went and purchased another car, also an Essex, but this time a six cylinder.

Chapter 7

William also operated quite a good coal business in and around Stourport-on-Severn, consisting of two coal trucks under his ownership on the railway, a horse and dray, which was used for street deliveries in Stourport and necessitating the employment of two men. There was also a horse and cart which delivered coal in bulk into Bond Worth's factory from the railway station which employed another man, and he had a small office in the station yard where two of his daughters were employed, Sophia Ellen and Lilley. William owned the franchise on all the coal delivered into Stourport railway station from the Highley pit, and under this franchise he was paid sixpence per ton.

It has already been said that William was a very astute businessman, and in the early days of the impending coal strike of 1926 he went to Pensax Colliery about ten miles west of Stourport where he purchased from them a large heap of mining waste known as "dross" which was hauled back to Stourport by a steam traction engine which was normally kept on a few acres of land which he owned at Baldwin Road, Stourport. When the strike began he was able, by prior arrangement with Bond Worth's, to hold the good coal for daytime use and at night the fires were banked up with dross. In this way they managed to keep Bond Worthy's factory working full time throughout the duration of the strike, while most of the other factories were either on short time or closed down. On hearing of this, Sir Herbert Smith, a carpet manufacturer (locally known as "Piggy") who at that time owned Witley Court, approached William for a supply of dross to supplement their good coal at Witley Court in the same manner, which William was only too ready to fulfil. The supply of coal to Witley Court was normally hauled from a coal wharf on the river Severn, slightly downstream from the Lenchford Hotel at Shrawley, a distance of between five and six miles. The volume of coal used at Witley Court was such that a haulier using a horse and cart was kept in permanent employ.

Chapter 8

A Report Taken From The Kidderminster Shuttle January 5th 1935

Theft Charge Fails

At Worcester on Monday, before Judge H.O. Farrant, William Weavers (68), a farmer of Shrawley, was charged with converting, as bailee, oak timber, the property of Sir George Vernon. Mr Donald Hurst, prosecuting, said the defendant was the tenant of Church Farm, Shrawley, which belonged to Sir George Vernon of Hanbury. Prisoner was also the owner of a farm in Borley.

Under the tenancy agreement, defendant was liable to keep up the fences and gates on his farm, for which purpose the landlord supplied the timber. Weavers was charged with taking material for two gates and three gateposts. In May 1933 he was given material at Hanbury Mills for four gates, which was taken to a Shrawley carpenter, who completed the job. The prosecution alleged the timber was later found erected on Boreley Farm, which was not on Sir George's estates.

Sir George made an inspection of Church Farm and saw there only one new gate and one new post, and the woodman went to Boreley Farm and recognised his own handiwork in the three posts he saw there.

When interviewed Weavers said if any of the timber had got to Boreley, it was by mistake. Cross-examined by Mr Bourke, Sir George agreed that he received a letter from Weavers offering to show him four new gates on the farm. He denied that he did not give him an opportunity of explaining, "He has been picking my pockets for the last 15 years, am I going to let him off now?" Sir George declared.

Council: But you did not give him a chance? – If a man picks your pocket and says he will put it back tomorrow, will you be satisfied? You are talking nonsense.

But why should he be dragged here when he could explain? – Because he is a rogue and has robbed me for years.

Cyril Powick, Sir George's woodman at Shrawley, said that in January Weavers asked him for four oak gate posts, three of which he later recognised at Boreley. Frank Merriman (20) labourer of Church Cottage, Shrawley, said he was formerly employed by Weavers before this trouble, and had since returned to his employ. He recalled being sent by Weavers to fetch the four gates. After putting further questions, Mr Hurst obtained permission to treat the witness as hostile, and proceeded to read a statement made by him previously, in which he declared that the gates were placed on a lorry and driven out of the yard.

Police Sergeant Hollyhead, of Great Witley, said that when he interviewed Weavers he was shown two new gates and told that there were two others on the premises.

The Defence

Before calling the defendant, Mr Bourke briefly addressed the jury and said in his belief this was a thoroughly vindictive and malignant prosecution.

Weavers, giving evidence, said he had bought timber with which he had repaired gates on Church Farm before now because he could not get any from Sir George. In 1933 he bought £7 worth from Hickmans, including two oak trees and a quantity of tops and with these repaired gates on the farm. He used this because it was cheaper than sending to Hanbury, which was 12 or 14 miles away. He denied that on the occasion in question, when he fetched the material for four gates from Hanbury, that he took it to Oakey. He took it straight back to Church Farm and it was mixed up with some of his own, before he sent sufficient for four gates to Oakey.

Since he got the supply of timber from Hanbury, he himself had put up 10 gates, 7 of which were new, and all of which were his own materials. When he went to the agent, Powick senior, to ask for posts, he said he had not any then. He told Powick that he had the post holes out and asked should he use his own and have the others later in return. The agent gave him permission to do this. These three he used at Boreley.

Weavers added that he made a mistake when he said to the Police Sergeant that some of the Hanbury gates might have been at Boreley. This was quite wrong as he had plenty of his own material. Weavers added: "I had no intention of robbing Sir George of a penny because I knew what sort of a gentleman he was".

Mr Hurst: Why did you take the trouble to bring wood all the way from Hanbury merely to lay it in your wainhouse? – We make them up in our spare time.

I suggest it was because you wanted people to forget? – Nothing of the sort.

Who makes the gates usually? – A man named Smith.

Why did you go to Oakey? – because Smith was away.

Has anyone but Oakey made any for you since May 1933? – I could not say.

Where did all these new ones come from that you have spoken about? – They have been on the farm for years.

Then how could you call them new? – Seven new ones have been put up.

Who made them and when? – Smith in 1933.

Is it not a coincidence that you went to Oakey to make the ones with the Hanbury material?

Didn't you go because he was the Hanbury man? – I never told him the timber came from Hanbury.

Do you know any reason why he should make such a statement? – No.

Have you made any enquiries as to how the mistake was made and the gates got to Boreley? – No Sir I don't think a bit of Sir George's timber got to Boreley. I admit the posts, which were given me by the agent.

Do you say that the timber forming the gates in question is not Sir George's? – I can't swear to it.

You have given evidence that you bought from Hickmans £7.8s worth of timber which included two trees and 27 tree tops. The receipt you produce for £7 8s is for two trees and 37 tops, how do you explain that? - there were two trees, one 75 feet and one 64 feet long.

The arrangement you speak of with Powick senior, I suggest you never made such arrangements? – I did.

You made no mention of it to the Police or in the Police Court – I never had an opportunity.
Mr Bourke: I shall ask permission to call Powick senior.

William Fasey, an agricultural engineer of Stourport, gave evidence of visiting Church Farm in October and of seeing four new gates hung here and one unhung. He also saw material for two other gates and six new posts.

Vernall Verity of Shrawley, a grandson of Weavers, told the jury that in February this year he put up seven new oak gateposts, six of which were the prisoner's own, which witness himself cut. Cross-examined by Mr Hurst, witness agreed that he had left Weavers employ, but returned in January last.

Mr Hurst: When were you first asked to remember last February? – Today.

And without any hesitation you can carry your mind back? – Yes.

Robert Jordan of Shrawley, a son-in-law of Weavers, spoke of fetching the timber in question from Hanbury and taking it straight to Church Farm. Later he took two gates out of some of seven or eight in the motor-house to Boreley.

Mr Hurst then called Edward Powick, who was Sir George Vernon's agent at Shrawley until a few months ago. Asked about the suggestion that Weavers had made that he had given permission for him to use his own posts for one purpose and estate posts for another, he replied "No such arrangement was made. I could not give Sir George's posts away".

Summing up the vice-chairman said that it was only necessary for him to deal with the evidence of the witness Oakey, because whether they convicted or not depended to a great extent on the evidence. Oakey had stated that in a conversation with the defendant a day or two before May 18th 1933, prisoner asked him to make four gates for which he was having timber from Hanbury. About May 18th the timber was delivered at his premises and he made the gates. They remained there until January 1934, when someone fetched them without his knowledge. On September 19th he was able to identify two of those gates on prisoner's farm at Boreley as his own workmanship.,

Dealing with the defence, His Honour said that the defence to the gates was a bona-fide mistake and the posts reached Boreley as a result of an arrangement with the elder Powick, which the man himself denied emphatically. It would be for the jury to judge whether they would accept this.

The jury was absent for a few minutes and, on their return, the Foreman announced that they found Weavers not guilty, and he was discharged.

Chapter 9

While at Church Farm, Shrawley, William and Sophia's lives were blighted many times in different ways. In 1930 their two sons who worked at the sugar beet factory in Kidderminster, were returning home after work on a motorcycle and at the bottom of the Windmill Bank, on the Areley Kings side of Stourport, were in collision with a large car driven by Sir George Eddy, Lord Mayor of Kidderminster. Sir George was at the time taking his young daughter to play tennis at Areley House, near Stourport bridge and apparently he did not stop after the accident.

Walter Weavers was riding the motorcycle with his brother Eric as pillion passenger. Both brothers were seriously injured and were taken by ambulance to Kidderminster hospital where, two days later, it was decided it was necessary to amputate Eric Weavers' leg above the knee. Eric was never able to wear an artificial leg due to the fact that too much bone had been left in and it would have needed a further operation to remove more bone, which he refused to have. A blood transfusion was needed, and Eric's older brother, Harold, volunteered as a donor, little realising that a short while later he himself would be admitted to the same hospital as the result of an accident at Steatite Porcelain Products Ltd., where he worked. He had jumped on to the running board of a car belonging to the firm in order to get a lift to the company's office and had missed his footing and fell, hitting his head. He was picked up suffering from concussion and taken to the hospital.

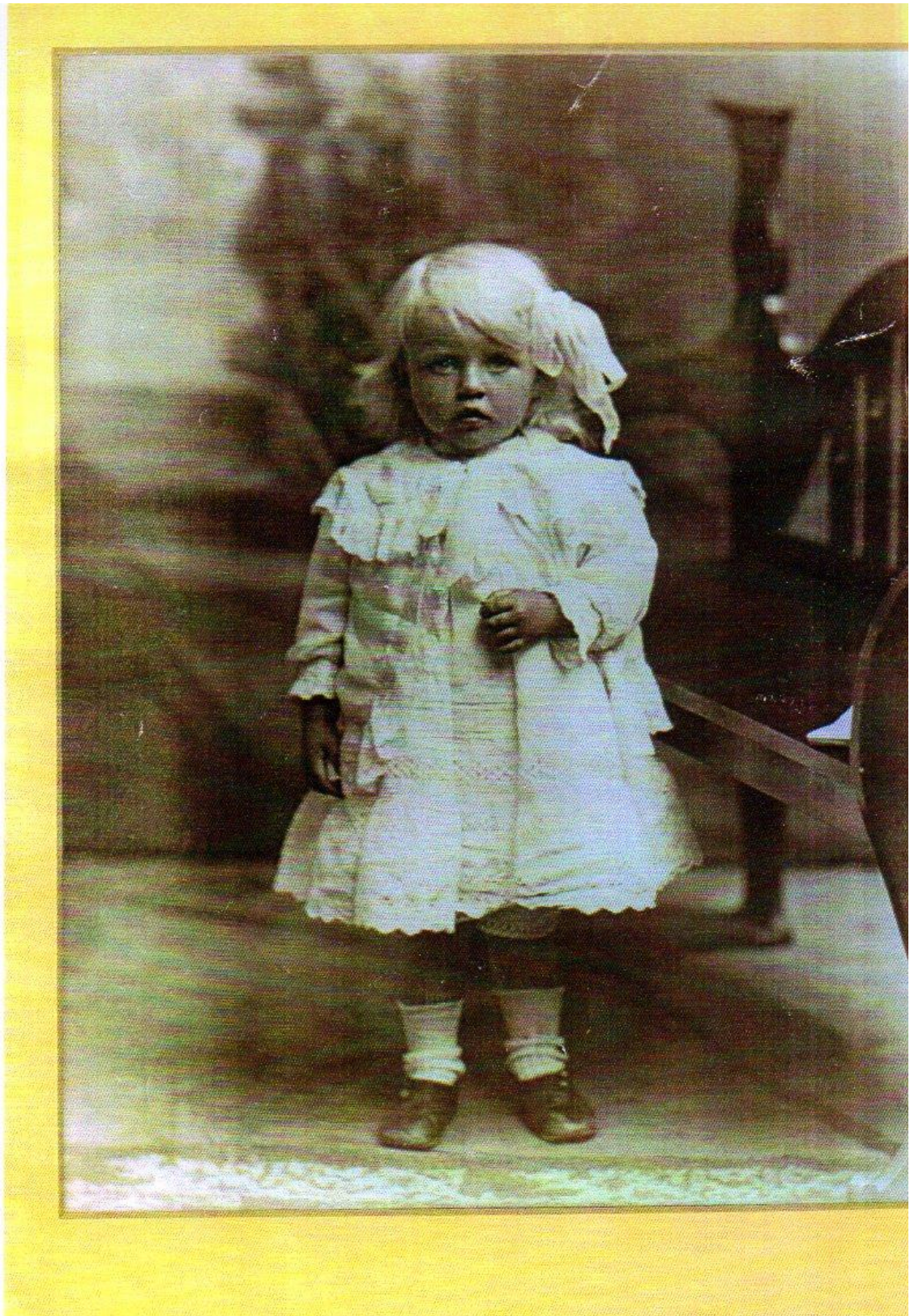
Shortly after this it was decided that Walter Weavers' leg could not be saved and he too underwent an operation. His leg was amputated below the knee. However, he was a little more fortunate than his brother as he was able to wear an artificial limb.

It seems that the case never went to court. Sir George Eddy accepted responsibility for the accident and the case for compensation was settled out of court, with Walter and Eric each receiving £2,000 compensation. In today's world Sir George Eddy would have been charged with failing to stop after an accident.

Chapter 10

William's eldest son, Harold Sidney, who had returned from service in the army in France in WW1 after being gassed, formed an association with a local Shrawley girl, resulting in the young lady in question becoming pregnant and giving birth to a son. Harold denied paternity and was subsequently taken to court where it was decided he was not the father, although local opinion said that he was. Sir George Vernon was apparently very annoyed at this, as the young lady's family were employed on his estate and it was his opinion that Harold should have married her.

Shortly after Harold left the village and went to live at the Glebe Farm that was still owned by his Father, William. Sir George would, on occasions, take the Weavers girls on outings in his car and they would stop at a cafe or tearoom and have tea. This continued until Peggy, the youngest daughter (adopted) was about fourteen years old and Sir George approached William and expressed his wish to adopt her, even to the extent of offering to buy her. The thought that he would even contemplate the sale of his daughter to Sir George upset William, and he denied him access to any of the girls after that.



Peggy Winifred (approx. age 4 years)



Peggy Winifred Weavers (as a teenager)

It naturally brought about deterioration in their relationship, and although he did not do it right away, William did eventually move to Boreley House Farm, but did not give up the tenancy of Church Farm. His two grandsons Vernall and Bert Verity carried on the management. By this time Sir George had adopted another girl from the village who worked for him as a domestic at the time and was a sister to the young lady who became pregnant.

SHRAWLEY MAN'S APPEAL.
Harold Sydney Weavers, farmer's assistant, Shrawley, appealed against an affiliation order made against him by the City Magistrates in respect of a child of Marjorie Powick, a school teacher, now living at Edgar street, Worcester, and formerly of Shrawley. The Hon. R. Coventry, K.C., appeared for the appellant, and Mr. Riley Pearson for the respondent.
Weaver gave a total denial of paternity. After a hearing of over 12 hours on Monday and Tuesday, the appeal was allowed, the Recorder stating that it had been a very painful and difficult case.

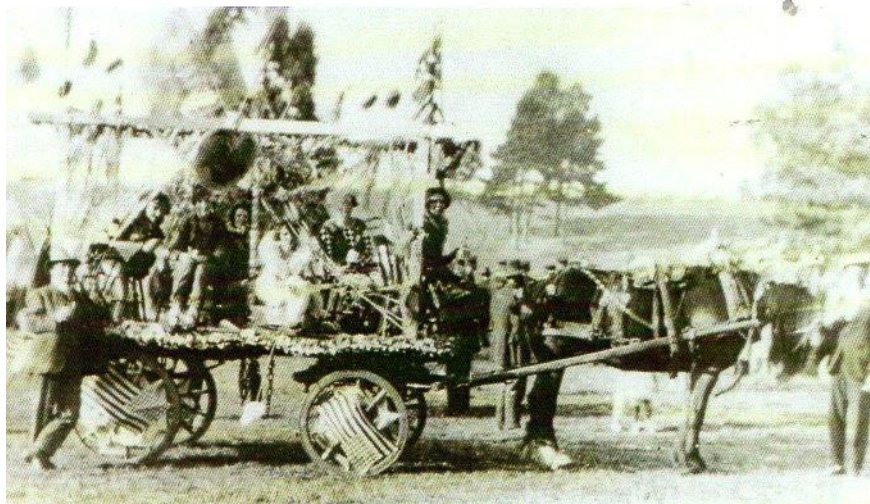
Report taken from the "Berrow's Worcester Journal"
March 25th 1921



Bert Verity feeding a lamb

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William supported and quite often took part in local functions, such as church fetes and other celebrations. In 1925 he had one of his horse drawn drays decorated and entered in the Stourport Carnival.



William Weaver stood at the back

Chapter 11

Daily Sketch

Friday May 27th 1937

Our contributor has toured west Worcestershire and interviewed people who know and love Mr Baldwin. In this second article of the series, which began yesterday, he describes a talk with Billy Weavers, who has known Mr Baldwin for over 50 years,

THE HUMAN SIDE OF A GREAT STATESMAN

What Worcestershire Thinks of Her Foremost Son
By Jesse Collings

There are few men in Worcestershire or Whitehall who know Mr Baldwin better than Billy Weavers, who has a farm in the village of Ombersley, and few men in Worcestershire better known than Billy Weavers.

Billy is what you might call a “character”. He is 71, but he is up every morning at five and off to Wolverhampton market, where he sells his farm produce from his own wagon.

Billy was left an orphan when he was quite a small boy. He was “boarded out”.

“I never had a home” he told me. “I never went to school. I was kicked about from pillar to post. When I started to work I could not read or write and did not know how to put down a figure”.

Billy taught himself all that. He started dealing in watercress. Then he got a milk business. He made his own signs for his figures in the milk book. Then he taught himself to read and write and do necessary sums.

He does not write like you or I. He writes with his left hand, but before starting he turns the paper sideways and writes downwards from top to bottom instead of from left to right.

Today Billy has a flourishing coal merchant’s business, owns and farms 600 acres of land, lives in a fine house and is not ashamed to admit that he is well-to-do.

He is especially proud of the fact that they knew him in Downing Street. Several times he and Mrs Weavers have been to have tea with Mr Baldwin at No. 10.

The Detectives on duty there knew him. They used to smile and say “Hello Billy” when he called. Then they would add “He’ll be out in a minute”.

And sure enough Billy was not often kept waiting at No. 10. Mr Baldwin would come out of his room. “Hullo Billy” he would say. “Come in and have tea”.

“One day when we called there Mrs Baldwin ‘phoned for tickets for us at a theatre” said Billy.

“The play was called ‘Willie’s Wedding’. We had a great joke about that. You see, my name’s Billy”.

One of Billy’s most treasured possessions is a letter from the Prime Minister on official Downing Street paper. It was written from No. 10.

Dear Billy,

Thank you for your letter. I wish there were more men like you in the world. We’d get a move on then – Yours sincerely Stanley Baldwin.

Billy has had the letter framed. He is proud of the fact that in the midst of a busy session, Worcestershire’s Prime Minister could find time to write a letter to an old friend.

PUT DUTY FIRST

"I have known Mr Baldwin for more than fifty years" Billy told me. "When he was first elected to Parliament I helped to carry him shoulder high through the streets of Worcester from the Shire Hall to the Star Hotel, while the people lined the road and cheered.

"And he was a good weight, I can tell you".

"Later on we pulled his car all the way from Areley Kings to his home at Astley Hall".

"I can tell you this of Mr Baldwin, he is a man who always put duty first. He thought more of his country than of himself.

"We shall have a job to find another man in England as good as he is".

At one time Billy Weavers lived at Bull Hill Farm, Astley, 200 yards from Mr Baldwin's home. He watched the Baldwin children grow up.

"They used to come and play around the farm" he said.

"They's romp in the hay and work in the hayfield. Mr Baldwin often came to see me. I ticked him off once when he came".

"Damn bad" says I.

"Bad" says he. "Why?"

"Why" says I, "because you've tacked a wages bill on to us farmers and given us nothing to pay it with". That was a hit at him over the Agricultural Labourers' Wages Bill.

"You should have heard him laugh".

It is his homely friendliness that has endeared Mr Baldwin to his people.

Everywhere you go in West Worcestershire you hear the same story, varied only by the personal aspect.

Mr Hubert Pratt, who has a fine farm at Astley, has memories of Mr Baldwin going back long before the day when he first sought election of Parliament.

"He was Chairman of the Parish Council when he was quite a young man" Mr Pratt said to me "and he was always keen on local administration".

"When he went into Parliament I remember the late Canon Buckle, who was then Rector of Astley, saying to me one day: "Pratt", he says, "you'll see Stanley Baldwin Prime Minister of England before many years are passed".

"It was a wonderful prediction. Mr Baldwin was quite young then. Few of us dreamed that he would ever become the leading statesman of the country".

£5 IN THREEPENNY BITS

With a twinkle in his eye he told me of how Mr Baldwin made an unusual contribution to the collection plate in church.

“I was churchwarden” he said “and it was Mr Baldwin’s custom to walk to church every Sunday morning.” One Sunday, in the course of his sermon, Canon Buckle reproved people for putting as little as possible in silver into the collection plate, and was particularly severe on what he described as “the blaspheming threepenny bit”.

“Next Sunday morning when I passed the plate along Mr Baldwin’s pew what should he do but drop a bag into it containing £5 in threepenny bits”.

Boreley Farm

In 1932 William, accompanied by his grandson, Herbert Verity, attended a property sale at the Star Hotel, Worcester, where he purchased two farms and a pair of farm cottages. The properties being:

Boreley Farm, Ombersley

Carpenters Farm, Boreley, Ombersley

Brook Cottages, Borely, Ombersley

Boreley, being a small hamlet in the parish of Ombersley.

The two farms were about half a mile apart, and the cottages were halfway between the two farms.

William and Sophia moved from Church Farm, Shrawley to Boreley House Farm, leaving Vernall Verity and his brother Herbert to run Church Farm. Harold, William’s eldest son with his family moved to Carpenter’s Farm. The Brook Cottages were later occupied by farm labourers. It was at about this time that the two large greenhouses were moved from the Glebe Farm to Boreley, and from then on were used to grow tomatoes and other tender crops.

Chapter 12

WORCESTER EVENING NEWS

May 5th 1937

Golden Wedding Gift

From Premier and His Family

For Mr and Mrs William Weavers

Golden sunshine, golden gifts and glad re-unions were appropriate accompaniments for golden wedding celebrations held at Boreley Farm, Ombersley on Tuesday. Mr and Mrs William Weavers held court all day at their home into which telephone messages, letters and friends flowed almost continuously.

Both Mr and Mrs Weavers are Worcestershire folk who have collected a wide circle of friends during their long and happy life together. It was therefore not surprising that such overwhelming tokens of affectionate regard should crown their 50th wedding anniversary.

Blessed with ten children and 21 grandchildren and one great grandchild, Mr and Mrs Weavers spent the day surrounded by the majority, who had all contributed to one of their most beautiful presents, a gold loving cup, suitably inscribed. The latest addition to the family, Arthur Geoffrey, aged six weeks and not yet christened, was one of the guests of honour, although he could not appreciate the auspiciousness of the occasion.

Premier's Gift

A golden wedding anniversary is a great event in anyone's life and so, even without the excuse of the approaching Coronation festivities, there would have been a point hanging out bunting and flags and decorating the farmhouse with symbols of the joyfulness that reigned within.

There was a fine array of gifts and flowers, among which a gold wristlet watch, "from the bridegroom to the bride" and a gold inscribed fountain pen sent from the Prime Minister, Mr Stanley Baldwin, and the members of his family predominated. The latter gift was the visible expression of many years of friendship which Mr and Mrs Weavers have enjoyed with the Prime Minister and Mrs Baldwin, and was brought to them by Lady Huntingdon Whitely who stayed to tea and admired the gifts, among which the golden pen was to take pride of place.

A *bouquet* of red roses and a blue and gold cushion were gifts of Mrs Foxwall and Mrs Bennett, both of whom attended the celebrations and possessed bright memories of the wedding day 50 years ago at which they were bridesmaids.

Tea time saw the cutting of a three tier cake, ornamented with gold and surmounted with a miniature bouquet of forget-me-nots. Afterwards there were games and good wishes expressed in song and speech. The reaching of such an epoch – to be happily wed for 50 years thoroughly deserves such a distinguished label – lends itself to reminiscences, and when they come from a man who has lived so fully as Mr Weavers, they are well worth the hearing.

- 1 ?
- 2 ?
- 3 Mrs Christine Rainbow. (nee Verity)
- 4 Mrs Annie Wilson. Sister to No 32
- 5 Walter Jeffrey Weavers.
- 6 Albert Weavers.
- 7 Harold Sidney Weavers.
- 8 Mrs Gladys Wade. (nee Verity)
- 9 Mrs Peggy Maggs. (nee Weavers)
- 10 William Tippin.
- 11 Mrs V Weavers (nee Tippin).

- 12 Arthur Henry Weavers.
- 13 Ruben Maggs.
- 14 Mrs Doris Amy Jordan. (nee Weavers)
- 15 William Cooper,
- 16 Mrs Lilley Tippin. (nee Weavers)
- 17 Mrs Georgina Cooper. (nee Weavers)
- 18 Robert Jordan.
- 19 Mrs Florence May Goodman. (nee Weavers)
- 20 William Arthur Goodman.
- 21 Mrs Rose Halbeard. Sister to No 32
- 22 Mrs Lavinia Weavers.(nee) Edwards



- 23 Joan Weavers.
- 24 Daisy Bell Goodman.
- 25 Derek Weavers.
- 26 Eric Weavers.
- 27 Clifford Geoffrey Goodman.
- 28 Geoffrey Weavers. (Baby)
- 29 Margaret Weavers.
- 30 William Weavers.

- 31 Colin Jordan.
- 32 Mrs Sophia Jane Weavers.
- 33 Mary Weavers.
- 34 Mrs Ellen Verity. (nee Weavers)
- 35 Eric Stanley George Goodman.
- 36 Ivor Harold Goodman.
- 37 Dorothy May Goodman.
- 38 Marilyn Jordan.
- 39 Frederick Halbeard.

SELF-MADE MAN AND PROUD OF IT

"I am a self-made man – and proud of it" he told our reporter "working hard, rising early and thoroughly enjoying my holidays abroad. He was working at the age of nine and has continued that way ever since, not only on his own behalf, for he has served the county in many ways, not least of which was as a Martley Urban Rural District Councillor for 29 years, and as a member of Stourport Urban Council. He also served on Witley and District Farmers' Club.

The boy who never went to school and taught himself to read by spelling out words from copies of the "Kidderminster Times" more than 50 years ago, and whose efforts of self-education were long but untiring, looks back with satisfaction at hopes realised and ambitions attained in the sphere of farming and as a coal merchant. He now farms more than 500 acres represented by farms at Boreley and two at Shrawley. His market stand at Wolverhampton has long been well known, and it is his policy to supply direct to the public.

His wife, born at Bishop's Wood, who did not have to change her name upon marriage, has been a devoted and energetic partner in all enterprises. Her interest and sympathy too, have been with him in his backing of Mr Stanley Baldwin ever since the great occasion when he carried the youthful politician of 29 years down the steps of the Shire Hall in triumph, after his first victory for the Conservative cause in Bewdley.

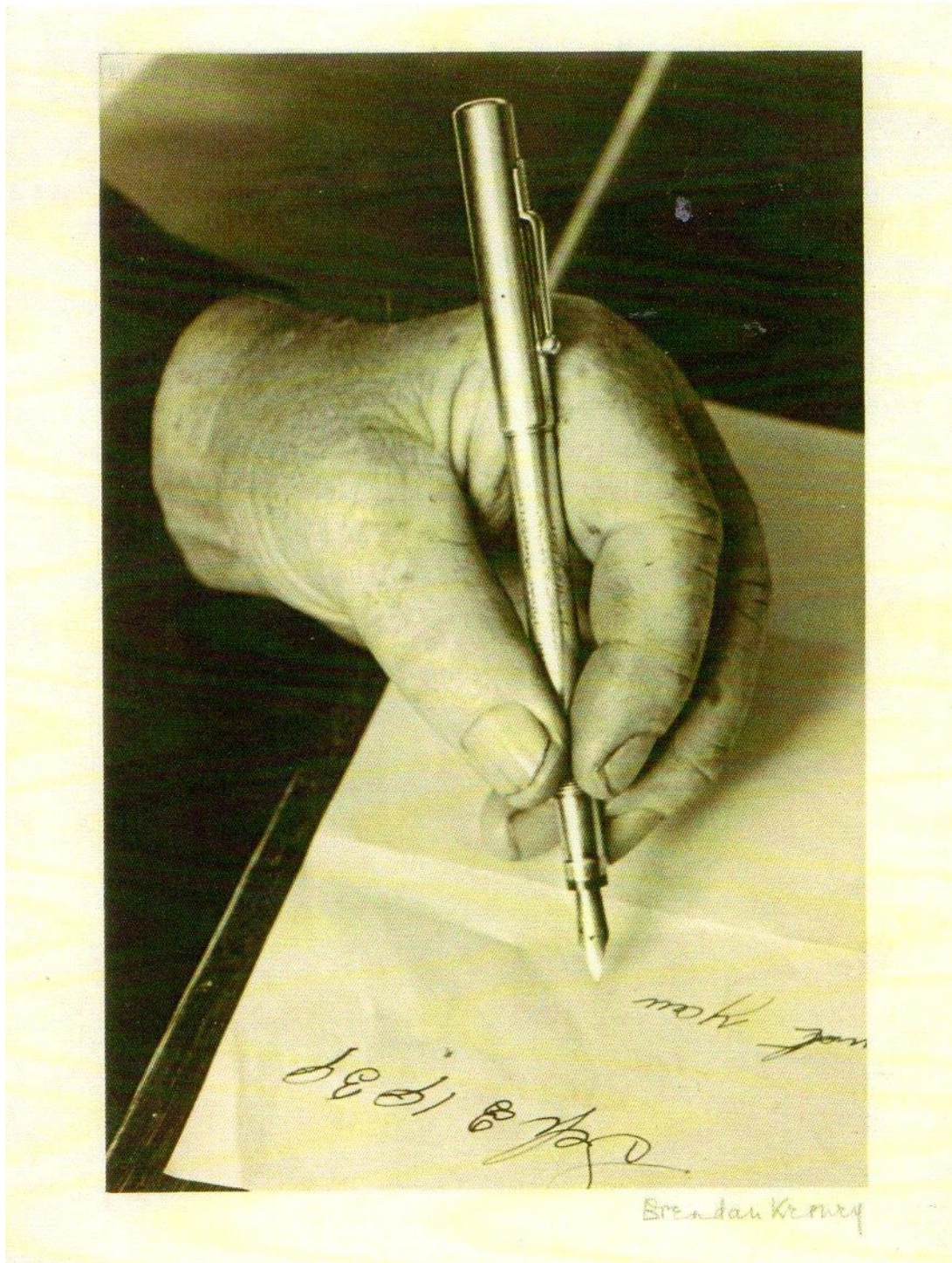
WELCOME AT NO 10

"I have been a supporter of Mr Baldwin all my life" said Mr Weavers, who went on to tell of the many occasions, always at Christmastime, that he and Mrs Weavers have visited Astley Hall. They have been welcomed too at 10 Downing Street, from whence came a telegram of good wishes on their golden wedding day. Perhaps Mr Weavers' greatest treasure is the letter he received from the Premier in 1926 in which these words occur "I wish there were more men like you in the world, we'd get a move on then."

Telegrams included on from Cyril, Doris and Wesley, A Wison (London), Moore's (Great Witley), Grahame Clarke and family, Mr and Mrs Perrenoud, Clement Dalley & Co., Kidderminster, Mr and Mrs Lee and Joyce, Mr and Mrs Stanley Barten, Major and Mrs Philip Robinson, Gertie and Albert, M A Munslow and Carter Redline, Herbert Oliphant and Beatrice Kennard, Roland Worth and many others.

Asked if the 50 years of married life had seemed as long as its span, both Mr and Mrs Weavers replied most heartily in the spirit of, though not in the words of Chevalier's song "it don't seem a day too much".

Their many friends will wish them good fortune and continued happiness and, of course, an equally joyful diamond wedding day ten years from now.



William Weavers' hand holding the gold fountain pen presented to him by Stanley Baldwin

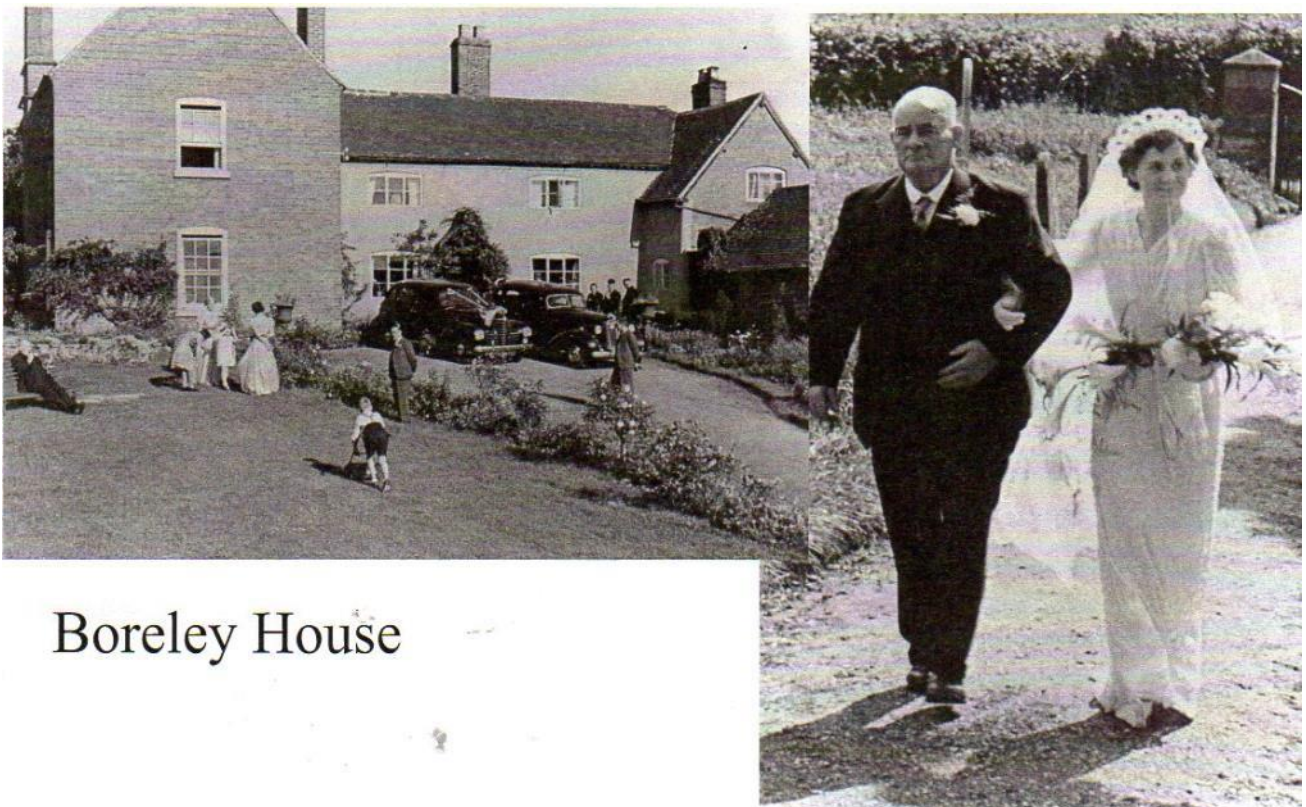
Chapter 13

When William and Sophia moved from Church Farm, Shrawley, in 1932 and went to Boreley Farm, Ombersley, Sophia took with her her granddaughter, Gladys Verity, of whom she had become very fond during their time together at Church Farm, She became Sophia's companion and help, although she was treated as a daughter, and she stayed with her grandfather and grandmother until she married on September 3rd 1939, the day World War 2 was declared. As already stated Gladys was the daughter of Sophia Jane Helen, the third daughter of William and Sophia.

At the age of twenty she married Oswald Verity, a timber merchant, and moved to Derbyshire, but the family returned to Shrawley after the birth of their son Herbert (Bert) to live at the Wood Farm, one of the farms rented by William from Sir George Vernon. Whilst at Wood Farm Oswald and Sophia Jane had two more children, and shortly after the birth of the last one, Christine, Oswald left them and was later found to be living in Cheltenham.

With four small children to care for as a single parent, Sophia Jane found it impossible to additionally run the farm and was forced to live with William and Sophia and their family in the large house at Church Farm, where they remained after William and Sophia moved to Boreley.

When Gladys Verity was married to Herbert Wade at Shrawley Church on September 3rd 1939, she was given away by her grandfather William and the reception was held at Boreley House.



Boreley House

Shortly after the happy event of their granddaughter's wedding on the 3rd September, tragedy again struck William and Sophia with the tragic loss of two of their grandchildren, Mary and Geoffrey, Geoffrey being their youngest grandchild, the children of Harold and Jane May, William and Sophia's eldest son and daughter-in-law.

Evening News & Times

Saturday September 16 1939

Ombersley Blazing Barn Victims

Boy Plays with Matches Starts Fire

How two children were fatally burnt in a fire which was started by a nine year old boy who was playing with a match in a barn containing between 70 and 80 tons of hay and straw was told at an inquest at Boreley on Friday. The enquiry, conducted by the District Coroner, Mr A. D, Capel Loft, concerned Ellen Mary Weavers, aged 6 years and seven months, and Arthur Geoffrey Weavers, aged 1 ½ years – daughter and son of Mr and Mrs Harold Sidney Weavers of Carpenter's Farm, Boreley. Ombersley.

The tragedy occurred on Thursday 7 when the children were playing in a Dutch barn with Brian Nash aged 9 from Stirchley, Birmingham, who was staying at Boreley. The girl was able to scramble away from the flames, but died in Worcester Royal Infirmary the same night. It was impossible to rescue the boy who was caught in the midst of the burning fodder.

Found Match in his Pocket

Arthur Henry Weavers, Boreley House Farm, Ombersley, said he saw the charred body of his nephew at 9.30 pm, and the following day visited Worcester Infirmary and identified the body of his niece.

Brian Nash aged 9 or 97 Ashbrook Road, Stirchley, Birmingham, said he was staying with Mrs Moss at Boreley on September 7. He went with Mary and Geoffrey Weavers in the afternoon to play in the barn and found a match in his jacket pocket. It was the only match he had, and he was playing with it with his fingers when it ignited.

He did not strike the match properly. It struck on his fingernails and he dropped it into the straw and started a fire.

"I ran out", the boy continued "and I was frightened and went to Mr Burrow's house, but he was not there. I saw him by Mrs Moss's house and told him there was a fire"

The boy added that he thought the two children had run out of the barn and he did not see them when the match lighted. In answer to the Coroner the boy said his mother did not

allow him to have matches, and he did not know where that one he had in his pocket came from. He was sure he had not got a matchbox.

The Coroner – “Don’t you know it is dangerous to play with matches in a straw stack?”. – “Yes”.

Thought Playmates Ran Out

The boy, continuing, said they were playing in the middle of the straw stack and he thought when he ran away, the other children followed him out. He did not look to see if they were following him.

George Allen Burrows, farmer, of Boreley Farm, Ombersley, said the Dutch barn adjoined his farm and it was about half full. At about 3.25 p.m. on September 7th the boy Nash came to him and told him that the barn was on fire. At the time he was about 100 yards away. “I asked the boy if he had set it on fire and he replied “yes” and then I asked him where the other children were, and he told me they had run away”.

“I did not think for a minute that there were any children in the barn and when I saw that the contents were blazing furiously I went to the nearest ‘phone” said Mr Burrows.

He made attempts from two ‘phones to get the police but could not get through for some time. When he returned to the fire he was told that there was a perambulator and a child in the barn, but was later told that there was no perambulator but that Geoffrey was in the fire. Witness went as close to the fire as possible and buckets were thrown.

Flames Were Very High

The Coroner: If you had gone to the fire the first time you may have saved the child? –The flames were very high at that time.

Mr Burrows added that the body was recovered before the fire brigade arrived.

Jane May Weavers, mother of the children, said at about 3.15 p.m. her children went out to play, Mary saying that they were going to play on Mrs Moss’s lawn and taking Geoffrey with her,. About 15 minutes later she heard screams coming from the direction of Boreley Farm and on running there saw that the Dutch barn was on fire and well alight. She saw Mary scrambling out of the barn but did not see Geoffrey. Mrs Weavers added that it appeared as if the children were in a hole, and the little boy could not scramble out. “Mary’s hair and clothes were on fire when she ran to me” said Mrs Weavers “and I put her on her back in some nettles and extinguished the flames”. She thought Mary said Geoffrey was in the barn, but at that time the flames were awful and it was impossible to get anywhere near the barn.

Dr James Brocket (Stourport) said he arrived at the scene at about 3.45 p.m. and saw the charred body of the little boy, which was unrecognizable. – almost burnt to a cinder.

The girl had been taken to the house and first aid rendered very efficiently for extensive burns.

The ambulance had been sent for and he waited until its arrival.

The doctor said that the girl was suffering from severe shock, and he passed the remark that he did not think she would live the night.

The cause of death was burns and shock.

P.C., Dentist of Ombersley said he arrived at Boreley Farm at 3.50 p.m. in company with Sergeant Stockton. They found the barn blazing furiously.

Buckets of water were being thrown on to the flames.

He was informed that there was a child in the barn, but it was impossible to get within seven or eight yards of the barn.

When he could get close he thought he saw the child lying in the straw and he threw buckets of water round that spot, but it was not until 4.25 p.m. that the body was recovered with the aid of a long pole.

He saw the little girl at Mrs. Moss's house and she had been efficiently treated for extensive burns.

Police Sergeant Stockton said that when he was informed of the fire he attempted to contact the fire brigade, but the telephone wire between Ombersley was out of order.

He made several attempts, but it was not until 4.10 p.m. that the fire brigade received the message. They arrived at the scene of the fire at 4.30 p.m. Everything humanly possible had been done before the arrival of the brigade and the helpers had done well.

A Boy From The Town

Returning a verdict of death by misadventure the Coroner said that it was the saddest inquest he had ever attended. The lives of two little children, one aged two and the other six, had been lost in a fire which had been brought about by the action of the boy Nash who was nine years old and came from the town. It was through him playing with a match that the fire had been caused, but by living in the town he could not possibly realise the danger of playing with a match in the middle of a straw stack.

The boy said he had struck the match on his nail. He might have done said the Coroner, but he did not propose to censure him as the boy did not realise what he was doing. "When he grows up he will know that it was through his carelessness that two lives were lost" said the Coroner..

The Coroner said that if Mr Burrows had thought – and he probably did not think – and had gone to the fire he might have seen the little girl and might have rescued the little boy. He thought the chance was very slight because the little boy was right in the middle and could

not get out, but the little girl, being older and stronger, managed to get out. The mother did everything she could do and might have saved the little girl's life if she had not been so badly burnt.

Before the doctor arrived everything had been done that could possibly have been done, and the little girl was treated most efficiently, and every credit was due to Mrs Moss and the mother. He thought that the fire brigade arrived very quickly when they eventually received the message, which was considerably delayed by the telephone wire being out of order. This was unfortunate, but he did not think they could have saved the lives of the two children.

They Would Never Forget

Expressing his sympathy to the parents of the children the Coroner said it was a dreadfully sad thing to happen and one which they will never forget. He said he would also like to sympathise with the grandparents, Mr and Mrs William Weavers.

Inspector J.J. Hollyhead (Worcester) also expressed his sympathies on behalf of the Police.

Mr Weavers thanked them for their expressions of sympathy.

WILLIAM'S SHEEPDOG

Sometime shortly after William and Sophia moved to Boreley the following story came into being. It seems William, who was never afraid of hard work, drove from Boreley to Church Farm with his sheepdog (Carlo) to attend the sheep kept there. Whether it was foot rot attention, shearing or dipping, we do not know, but more often than not he carried out a lot of this work himself.

William smoked a pipe pretty well all his life and while attending different tasks it was not unusual for him to remove the pipe from his mouth and place it on top of the nearest post or convenient spot in order that it would go out, a lesson learned on previous occasions when he had put the lighted pipe into his pocket and set his clothing on fire. He again, on this occasion, placed his pipe on one of the posts supporting the sheep pen and, when the work with the sheep was finished, he returned them to the field, after which he went to his car, again accompanied by Carlo, and drove back to Boreley, by which time it was teatime.

William sat and had tea with his family and when he had finished he reached in his pocket for his pipe, only to realise he had left it behind at Church Farm. Apparently William had previously spent some considerable time in training Carlo to retrieve different things, his pipe being one of them, and on this occasion set Carlo one of his most difficult tasks. From his seat at the tea table William said "Carlo, I have left my pipe at Church Farm, go and fetch it" and without any further prompting Carlo left the house and was gone for some considerable time.

The distance between Boreley and Church Farm would be between five and six miles and one can only imagine how long it would take a dog travelling at its own speed to cover that distance.

The dog would have to have travelled about a mile and a half to the river bridge at Holt Fleet to cross the river, and from there on a further three and a half miles at least. The route was not strange to Carlo as he had covered it many times before while driving livestock from one farm to another. However, there was no one more surprised than William when Carlo returned carrying his pipe. Never had he sent him such a distance to retrieve anything. Of course to have attempted such a thing in this day and age would have meant almost certain death to the dog, but traffic then was so light and so much slower it would not have seemed untoward.

The Final Chapter

After the loss of their two children Harold and his wife, Jane May, moved to Stourport-on-Severn where Harold took over the management of the coal business, and William sold Carpenter's Farm, the scene of the tragedy, presumably to lessen the devastating effect it had upon their lives. Even so, William was never quite the same after, and one often wonders if it took a few years of his life.

In April 1943 William took to his bed with 'flu or some other respiratory illness, which developed into pneumonia from which he did not recover.

William died at his home in Boreley on May 5th 1943 surrounded by his family.

Report Taken from Berrow's Journal 13th May 1943 Death of Mr M Weavers

Well Known Worcestershire Farmer

The death took place at Boreley House, Ombersley, on Sunday, of Mr William Weavers. Mr Weavers was 73 years of age and was a very well known agriculturist. Born at Kidderminster, he was married at Hartlebury Church and the 56th anniversary of his wedding day was celebrated on May 4. He farmed Anchor Farm, Stourport, and moved from there to Bull Hill, Astley. About 30 years ago he moved to Church Farm, Shrawley, and 10 years ago to Boreley House Farm, which he had purchased two years previously. He still continued to farm Church Farm and Wood Farm, Shrawley.

He was a very ardent Conservative and at election times always provided rooms at Church Farm, Shrawley, for the local Conservative committee.

He served for many years on the committee of the Witley and District Farmers' Club, was on the Stourport Urban District Council for several years, and for the last 29 years had represented Shrawley on the Martley Rural District Council.

Of a family of 14 children, two died very young, two daughters died at 21 and 28 years of age, and five sons and five daughters survive. They are Harold Sidney, Vernon Road, Stourport, Albert, an ambulance instructor in London, Arthur, who lived at home with his parents, Eric a farmer at Shrawley, Walter, a transport contractor at Kempsey, Mrs Nellie Verity of Manor Road, Stourport, Mrs May Goodman of Holt Castle, Mrs Doris Jordan of Shrawley, and Mrs Georgina Cooper of Lark Hill, Kidderminster, in addition to an adopted daughter, Mrs Peggy Maggs.

About six years ago two of Mr Weavers' grandchildren, a girl of 7 and a boy 2, were burnt to death, through a shed filled with straw at Boreley in which they were playing with other children, catching fire, and Mr Weavers never thoroughly recovered from the shock of this tragedy.

THE FUNERAL

The funeral took place on Wednesday at Shrawley, in which parish he farmed for many years and where two of his daughters were buried. The service in the church, which preceded the interment, was conducted by the Rector (Rev H F Crennell). A large number of agriculturists from a wide area, together with representatives from the Wolverhampton Wholesale Market, were included in the crowd, which was so large that insufficient seating accommodation was available.

More than twenty employees filed into the church behind the family mourners who included the widow:

Messrs. Harold, Albert, Arthur, Walter and Eric (sons); Mesdames Verity, W. Goodman, W. Tipping, R. Jordan, W. Cooper and R. Maggs (sons-in-law), Mrs Wilson (sister-in-law), Mr R. Wilson (nephew), Mr and Mrs F. Halbeard (brother-in-law), and (sister-in-law), Police Inspector B. Powell (step-brother), and Mr and Mrs V. Verity, Cpl H. Verity R.A.F., Mrs Wade, Miss C. Verity, Mr S. Goodman, Miss Joan Weavers A.T.S., and Miss Pam Weavers (grandchildren).

Employees attending included Messrs. F. Harries. Harry Wood, J. Moseley, H. Saunders, W. Downes, W. Harries, E. Bradley, H. Bishop, J. G. Prosser, H. Bishop Jr, G. Wheeler, J. Cooper, C. Harries and S. Ford, and Mrs F. Wheeler and Mrs E. Harries.

Others present included Mr H. Oliver, Mr S. Moss, Mr A. Baylis, Mr Wilcox (also representing Mr G. Clarke), Mr and Mrs J. Jordan (Astley), Mr W. J. Baker, Mrs Watkins, Mrs O. James (also representing Mr G. James), Mr C. Lea, Mr K. L. Needham, Messrs John Dalley and Harry Cowderoy (representing Messrs Clement Dalley and Co. Ltd.), Mr H. D. Stringer (Midland Bank, Stourport), Mr W. Whitmore and Mr and Mrs H. Brooks, Mr J. Powell, Mr W. H. Hammond, Mr T. A. Fathers (representing Messrs Fathers and Sons Ltd.), Mr B. Worth, D. C. Mackie, Col. P. W. Robinson (representing Dr E. B. Robinson), Mr R. R. Cosnett, Mrs Cosnett, Mr J. A. McLauchlan, Mr N. H. Capel Loft, Mr J. M. Dickson, Mr Harry Goodall (representing Wolverhampton Wholesale Market), Mr W. A. Silvester, Mrs Colebatch, Mr R. T. Brookes, Mr Tony Banks (representing Mr G. Herbert Banks), Mr S. C. Knight, Mr H. J. Smith and Mrs A. G. Taylor.

Among the floral tributes was a wreath bearing the following inscription "In Remembrance of an old Friend from the Earl and Countess Baldwin of Bewdley",

Another wreath was sent by Commander Sir Maurice and Lady Huntingdon Whiteley.

Other wreaths included those from the widow and family; Jim and Lucy and family; Rose and Fred; Vin, Bob, Glad and Jack; Pam, Bill and George; Annie and family; Vernie, Daisy and family; Bill and family; Reuben and grandchildren Dorothy and Tom; Jack and Harry; Margaret, Derek and Bobby; Dot; the grandchildren; Mr and Mrs W H Hammond; Messrs Fathers and Sons Ltd.; Mr and Mrs H Brookes; Mr and Mrs L Needham; Mr and Mrs Whitmore; Mr and Mrs R Green; Miss Wood; S Ford and family; Mr Mills and family; Mr and Mrs A B Tyler; Mr and Mrs S Moss and family; Joseph Hare; Mr and Mrs Tom Ward; Harry and Flora Goodall; Mr H Oliver and family; Mr and Mrs W E Arnold; Employees at Boreley farm; Mr M E Perenoud; C J Marks and Sylvia; Mrs C H Payne; Crawford and Miss Thornton; W A Silvester and family, Mr and Mrs A G Taylor; Mr and Mrs F Hodson; Mr and Mrs W Thompson; Mr and Mrs G James; Nellie, Margaret and Doreen; All the old Shrawley men and women workers; Mr and Mrs Harvey Green; Miss Cooper; Mr and Mrs R Tarford; Messrs A D and N H Capel Loft; Drivers of W J Weavers, Kempsey; A Beard; A Dallow; Arthur Taylor and Tommy; Jack Vernall; Jack Greenway and J Hinton; George Clarke and Family; Mr and Mrs A Baylis; Mr and Mrs P R France; Mrs Cosnett and family, all at Wood Farm.

A V Band, St Nicholas Street, Worcester, carried out the funeral arrangements.

Sophia Jane, William's Widow continued living at Boreley House with their unmarried son Arthur Henry, who carried on the running of the farm. And in 1945 Sophia also died and was buried in the double grave with William at St Mary's Church, Shrawley.

*The researchers and writers of this book,
Clifford Geoffrey Goodman and Sophia Marylyn Knott
Are Grandchildren of William and Sophia Jane Weavers*

*For the benefit of anyone wishing to further investigate the Weavers'
Family history, William's ancestors were mainly from
The District of Little Cowerne, Herefordshire.*

*The name of his Grandfather was Peter Weaver and his Mother's maiden name was
Sarah Field.*

These families can be traced back to the 1700's