

A NEW HISTORY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

SAMUEL RUDDER 1779

Although Samuel Rudder's "A New History of Gloucestershire" was published in 1779, it has never been superseded.

Rudder's book comprises, as he indicates on the title page, not only the Topography, Antiquities, Curiosities and Produce of the County, but also the Trade and Manufactures. He notes, for numerous places, not only the history of trade and manufactures, but also their state at the time of writing, which makes his book of the greatest interest to industrial archaeologists and social or economic historians.

Believing that those sections dealing with industry will be of interest to GSIA members, we are reproducing them in serial form in the Annual Journal. The first part comprises Gloucester and items of interest from places listed under A.

GLOUCESTER

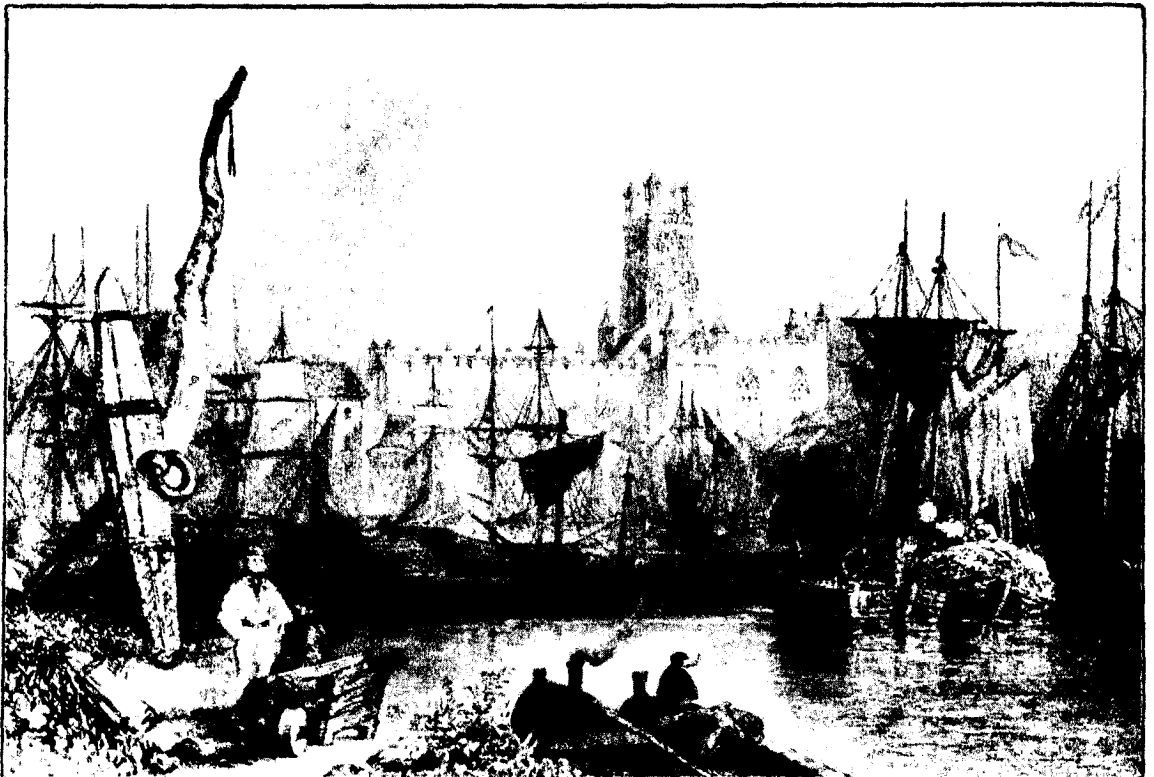
The chief employment of the town in and before the reign of king William the Conqueror, was making and forging of iron; and in the times of king Richard the Second and Henry the Fourth, 'twas eminent for its iron manufacture. The ore was brought from Robin-Hood's hill, at the distance of about two miles from the city, where it is said to have been found in great abundance.

Here was a street antiently called Smith-street*, mostly inhabited by persons employ'd in the ironworks, on which account I presume it had its name; but there were many

furnaces and forges in other parts of the city. These engines were then worked by hand, which, since the business has been carried on in a larger way, are moved by water; and the town then lost that manufacture which could no longer be carried on there but under great disadvantages.

Some have been of opinion that this city had formerly a greater share of the foreign trade of the nation than it now enjoys, and urge, that several benefactions have been expressly given to the merchant inhabitats; but probably, at that time, every considerable shop keeper was called merchant, as is the case at present in Scotland, and some other parts of the kingdom. However, without determining this matter, it is certain, that soon after the conquest many of the Jews, who subsisted intirely on trade and usury, and were a sort of wandering merchants, resided here; but what was the nature of their trade in this place I have not been able to discover any further with certainty. At present the foreign imports of the city are confined to the sole article of wines, which are in good repute.

Gloucester Docks
From an old print.



The cloathing business was formerly very eminent here, and Brook-street, situate upon Fullbrook, was the place of habitation for such as were concerned in that manufacture. As lately as the year 1629, here was a company of clothiers, who with the other companies attended the mayor on solemn occasions.

Cap-making was also a very considerable trade here, and employ'd a great many hands, but that, as well as the clothing, has long since deserted the city.

In the year 1626, at the decline of the clothing trade, that the poor inhabitants might not be destitute of employment, John Tilsley, to his great honour, brought hither the art of pinmaking** which was so properly encouraged and promoted, that it soon grew to be considerable, and has been gradually increasing ever since. In 1712, this trade is said to have returned £80 a week; but in 1744 the wages in this branch amounted to about the same sum, exclusive of materials, and together made a return of about £300 a week. At present the manufacture returns about £20,000 per ann. from London, besides a very extensive trade with the country.

Notes

* In king Henry the Third's time there was a place in smith-street called Colstall, M.S. Frouc. Perhaps the smiths put their coals here. It was generally afterwards called the Bareland; because it was bare or waste ground, not built upon, next to the bridge and the way into the castle.

** Pins were first made in England in the year 1543, before which the ladies used skewers, or rather, I suppose the prickles of thorns, curiously scraped, trimmed and dried; which the poor women in Wales call pin draen, and have served with them for the purpose of pins 'till lately, if they do not even at this time.

ABBENHALL

This is a small parish, full of little hills and dingles, within the hundred of St. Briavel's; twelve statute miles west from Gloucester, and three north from Newnham....

The stones in this parish are of a rusty colour, with shining particles of iron in their composition. The

greatest part of the land is pasturage with a considerable portion of commonable places, over-run with fern and bushes.

There is a place called Gun's Mills, where was formerly an iron furnace, but the machinery is now converted to the use of a paper-mill, which is driven by a fine spring of water rising out of a rock in the forest, on the side of a hill just above the mill.It is called St. Anthony's Well.

ABSTON AND WICK

Is a parish in the hundred of Pucklechurch, five miles west from Marshfield, seven south from Sodbury, seven east from Bristol, and seven north-west from Bath.

The great post and turnpike-road from London to Bristol leads through Wick, and there is beside, a turnpike-road from Bath, by the monument on Lansdown, which communicates with the Bristol road at this place.

Between this parish and that of Dointon, is a deep, narrow glyn, formed by rocks of a stupendous height, rising almost perpendicularly from the bottom, where the river Boyd runs. On the Dointon side are large fortifications and intrenchments opposed by others on the side of the glyn in this parish. The stone of the rocks I am speaking of, is of a compact texture, of which the inhabitants burn great quantities into excellent white lime. And there is in the neighbourhood, a blue kind of stone, which makes a brown lime, that hardens under water, and answers the purpose of foreign terras.

They dig coal in the parish, and burn large quantities of it into coak, for making of malt, and other purposes. Here is also lead ore, but the proprietors have not hitherto raised enough of it to answer the working.

ACTON or IRON ACTON.

Lies in the Vale, the greater part of it in the hundred of Thornbury... three miles W. from Chipping-Sodbury, seven southward from Thornbury, nine north-eastward from Bristol, and about twenty-nine south-westward from Gloucester.

....The great quantities of iron-cinders, lying about in several places, shew that here were formerly iron-works, which probably ceased for want of wood to carry them on,

for here is still great plenty of ore; hence it has sometimes been called Iron-Acton, to distinguish it from Acton-Turville, in the hundred of Grumbald's-ash. There is also a coal-pit now in work. The parish consists almost equally of pasturage and of arable ground. It lies on the verge of that country which is one vast continued bed of coal; but I cannot learn that it is remarkable for any other natural products beside the fossils already mentioned. The river Froome, rising at Dodington, receives the brook Laden at this place, and runs to Bristol, where it forms the key of that port.

ALDERLEY

Is a small parish in the hundred of Grumbald's ash, seated on a rising ground, yet sheltered every way by the hills that surround it, except on the west and south-west sides.....It lies three miles south from Wotton-under-edge, eleven westward from Tetbury, and about twenty-two southward from Gloucester.

The clothing business hath been settled here some hundreds of years since. Leland, in his Itinerary, calls Alderley a clothing village; but that business hath lately been declining in the whole neighbourhood.

ARLINGHAM

This parish lies in the hundred of Berkeley, ten miles north-westward from Stroud, nine north from Dursley, and nine south-westward from Gloucester. It is peninsulated by the River Severn on the east, west and north sides, and bounded by Frampton on the south-east. A turnpike road leads from Stroud to a passage over the Severn, in this parish; but the passage house is at Newnham, exactly opposite to Arlingham. The river at high water, is about a mile over, or something less. Persons well acquainted with the river, ride, and drive a carriage over the ford at this place, at low water; but some have miscarried in the attempt.

ASTON or COLD ASTON

About fourteen years since (i.e. 1698) in this parish, as a person was plowing with oxen one of the oxen faultered in a hole, which when the earth was removed from it, appeared like the tun of a chimney, through which several persons have been let down, where they found a cavity in which one might walk above half a mile one way, and it is not known how far the other...they observed several such tunnels ascending towards the surface of the earth.

AVENING

This parish lies in the hundred of Longtree. It is three miles south from Hampton, three north from Tetbury, nine west from Cirencester, and fourteen from Gloucester.

The parish consists chiefly of arable, with some wood lands and pasture ground. The clothing business furnishes employment for the lower class of the inhabitants.

The timber-wood of this parish and neighbourhood is chiefly beech, intermixt with oak and ash. The beech wood is manufactured into gun-stocks, card-boards, and saddle trees; and the refuse converted into charcoal, or used for common firewood.

Copies of Rudder's "New History of Gloucestershire" are available in the Glos. Records Office, Shire Hall, Gloucester, and the Glos. Reference Library, Brunswick Street. We are indebted to Miss Amina Chatwin for abstracting the present series from her own copy of the book.

An 18th century engraving, attributed to Thomas Ravenhill, showing pack horses laden with fleece in front of Avening Church.

