

Chapter Twelve

New trade

After more than three hundred years as glassmakers, about the year seventeen hundred, one branch of the family changed its trade from glass to tools. After 1719 Benjamin Tyzack lived in the parish of Norton, Derbyshire.

Benjamin was the fifth son of Paul and Ann Patchett. He was born in Hagley in 1684, but in 1713 he acted as executor for his brother Joseph's estate. Then he lived with his family at Langwith in Nottinghamshire. After that his activities were a bit complex.

Benjamin is found as a partner in an indenture to sell four cottages. It included two shops, a barn, a garden and a little close, of about half an acre. All were in Hagley near the way that leads to the Northfield at the brook. This had been left to him by his brother Paul in 1695, as he said in his will, **on the condition that it stay in the blood of the Tyzacks** ! Paul had purchased the property from Thomas Willis, a scythesmith, in 1685 for £55. Paul's original bill of sale only listed one cottage and showed the plot size then as a quarter acre. Benjamin sold the property for £66-5s, twenty-seven years later and seventeen years after Paul left it to him. In the indenture, Benjamin said he was a scythesmith and was living in the parish of Cookney Norton, in Nottinghamshire.

It is of interest to note that the condition that the land may only be held in the blood of Tyzacks brought the bequest under the law of *De Donis Conditionalibus*. This prohibited the free sale of such "entailed" land. I wondered at first how Benjamin could have managed to sell such land which had been left on condition that it stayed *in the blood of the Tyzacks*, presumably forever, but given enough lawyers anything is easy! The levying of a fine breaks the entail and allows the sale to proceed. Eventually I tracked down a separate indenture which exists in obscure Latin¹. This second indenture consists of the account of a fictitious court case which imposed a fine. It was written in an incredibly, (perhaps intentionally), difficult round script.

Benjamin⁽¹⁾ baptised his first child on 14th February 1712/13 in Cuckney Nottinghamshire. The IGI² records the son as Benjamin Sizar. By October 1713, about ten months later Benjamin⁽¹⁾ the elder, administered the estate of his brother Joseph, who died intestate. The administration papers said Benjamin⁽¹⁾ lived in

¹ BA 5467/26 Hereford and Worcester County Record Office.

² International Genealogical Index

Langwith in Nottinghamshire, which is a short way from Cuckney also in Nottinghamshire. In 1715 Benjamin and his wife Mary, née Goacher, baptised daughter Mary. About 1718 Benjamin and Mary made their most important journey when they moved to Norton, Derbyshire, near Sheffield. They baptised their next son John in 1719 in Norton Derbyshire. This last move was the root for the Tyzack family to become established and quite well known as toolmakers in Sheffield for the next two hundred years.

The reason why Benjamin did not become a glassmaker, was the depressed state of the glass industry then.

After the expiry of Mansell's patent in 1642 there was a period of much prosperity in the industry. Glass saw a big increase in its market. An ad valorem tax of 12p in the pound on all glass made in the kingdom was levied in 1645. If that were not bad enough, the war against France began in 1689; it was the new King William's answer to Louis XIV's attempt to restore the Stuarts to the English throne,.

By 1695 the costs of the war forced the Exchequer to impose a tax on a number of industries, including glass. At first it was said to be temporary but was made permanent the following year. Duty of twenty per cent was imposed on flint glass and one shilling a dozen on bottles. Judging by the many petitions to the House of Commons, it must have greatly reduced sales. For four years, by petition, by tract, by pamphlet, by meetings and demonstrations, a victory was won for the industry, which would be a model today for any manufacturers' federation on how to lobby. In 1699 the duty was withdrawn. During the duty period the Stourbridge industry was severely slimmed down. The industry gathered strength from the weeding out process but towards the end of the 1600's the price of glass began to fall.

The relief of the tax burden however, although of benefit, did not solve all the industry's problems. A change in fashion in window-glass brought crisis to the industry in Stourbridge.

Broadglass of the Lorrainers had in the past been the only glass used for windows, now however there was the brighter and thinner crown glass available. Crown glass was made by spinning the glass on the blowpipe. Once the bulb of blown molten glass on the blowpipe had been opened, the blowpipe was twirled round and round until the opened cup suddenly splayed out into a disc. Then as the spinning continued it became larger and larger and thinner and thinner. It was not touched until it became cooled and hardened and ready to be cut into panes. The process produced a naturally fired and unblemished surface. A bull's eye of glass was left at the centre. This process had originally come from Normandy.

In Stourbridge the local firms did not make this new crown glass until Batchelor's glass house at Dennis started to make it in 1728¹. Until that time they tried to compete with it by price.

In 1703 five Henzeys, three Tyzacks and three Batchelors with the Perrotts, who were merchants and glass makers of Bristol, set up a cartel. Their aim was to compete without changing their technology. They undertook for eleven years to draw their supplies from the first three firms. The attempt failed to stop the industry's decline.

By 1710 unemployed Broadglassmakers in Oldswinford advertised for work anywhere in the country. When Carré had made his agreement with Queen Elizabeth his price for glass had been set at 30s a case. Now, in 1712, 145 years later it was down to 22s a case. In 1716 the price had fallen to 18s and in 1717 the Henzeys were selling Broadglass from their Brettell Lane house for 16s. A few months later the Tyzacks came out at 14s 6d for the case.

From seventeen glasshouses in the Stourbridge area in 1696 the number fell to ten by the last quarter of the 1700's. In this depressed market the size of the Tyzack family, with five sons was more than the business could support. Being the youngest son, Benjamin had to find some job other than the family business.

He did, he became a scythemaker.

The glass industry soon recovered. Indeed other parts of the glass industry were not suffering the hardships. On 9th March 1711, the Court of the Company of Glaziers petitioned the Mayor and Aldermen for an increase in their Livery " *because the trade of glassmaking especially in Flint and Looking glasses is much improved of late years.*"² Those glassmakers who made what the market wanted did well. By 1740 William Fenny was building a new glassworks in Catcliffe. Clearly his part of the industry was doing well. Catcliffe is only six miles north-east of Norton. Fenny was from a Huguenot family and had married Mary Fox, whose family owned the Bolsterstone glassworks. The problems seemed to be only with the old technology of the broadglassmakers.

The clue to why Benjamin chose scythes as his trade, might be found in the agreement between his brother Paul and Thomas Willis. Paul bought his cottage from Thomas. Thomas Willis was a scythesmith. It is quite likely that some tools were left in the premises when the Tyzacks took over. At least by their links with Thomas they may have got some knowledge of the scythe business.

The job of John, another of Benjamin's brothers, was given in the agreement for the sale of the cottages. John was a collar maker. In those days such collars were made

¹ From Broad-glass to Cut Crystal, Guttery, page 43-44

² W. A. Thorpe, English Glass, page 162.

of wood and were put on horses for use in hauling. So John also could not be supported by the glass business.

We know that Benjamin went to live in Langwith but we do not know why he moved to that place so far away from Hagley. There were scythemakers in Stourbridge apart from Willis. For example Guttery tells us on page 79 ¹, that Waldron Hill married Elizabeth Tyzack. The Hills had a blade-mill in Kingswinford and were also scythesmiths. There must have been some other incentive for the move. Maybe it was to marry Mary Goacher of Cuckney or maybe it was because by the move a water mill became available to him.

Then Cuckney was generally a farming area. It did have the river Poulter running through it for about seven miles. River Poulter runs from just west of Langwith through Cuckney. It just skirts another Norton, this one in Nottinghamshire, and exits into the Great Lake. The river had a fall of about three hundred feet in its seven-mile course. If the example of the Sheffield rivers was typical there could easily have been between twenty and thirty mills in that length. Benjamin could have used any of these to power a grindstone for making his scythes.

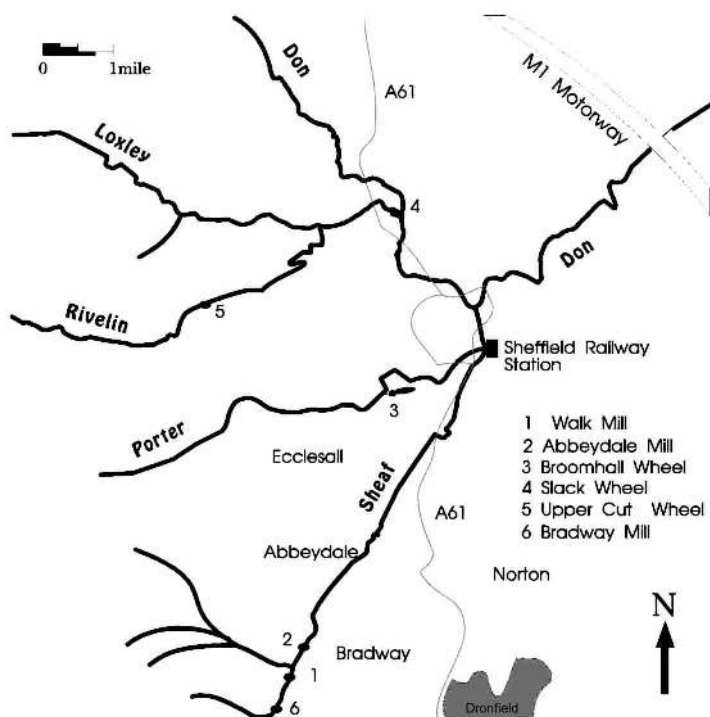
Basically the method used then for making scythe blades was to sandwich a piece of harder blade steel between two pieces of wrought iron. This sandwich was then heated to redness and hammered or forged until the layers welded together. The scythesmith made his weld with a sledgehammer wielded by hand or a tilt hammer driven by a water mill. So the scythesmith needed the water mill for powering both his grindstones and his tilt-hammer.

In spite of its industrial heritage Sheffield, even today has some nice countryside around it with hills and dales that in their turn form the basis for its many gushing streams and fast flowing rivers. It was not the beauty of the scenery or the then fresh country air that first brought our ancestors to this region. The reason at least for the tool industry to have done so well there, stems from several favourable factors. From those scenic hills and escarpments come two things, the local sandstone and water-power. First the local sandstone was ideal for grindstones. Indeed the quality and uniformity were so good that when made into circular blocks they could be rotated at high speed without fracturing. The stone was of ideal texture and hardness for tool shaping and sharpening. Much of this stone found a market in Europe because of its quality. Specialised requirements for various types of grinding could also be supplied. Various degrees of grit size and hardness were available from different local quarries. There were quarries at Wickersley, Thrybergh, Barnsley, Hathersage, Grenoside, and Bakewell.

The hills around also formed a catchment area. They supplied five fast flowing rivers, the Don, the Porter, the Rivelin, the Loxley, and of course the Sheaf from which Sheffield got its name. Long before 1765 when Watt had invented steam power or before the use of oil, gas or electricity, the rivers of the Sheffield area were producing

¹ From Broad-glass to Cut Crystal, D. R. Guttery

power for the industries along their banks. Such was the importance of these rivers as a source of power that at their peak in 1794 there were 137 mills on the five rivers. Of these, many powered a variety of industries. There were two snuff mills, some corn and some fulling mills, but most were engaged in metal working like grinding and forging. Some mills provided power for more than one device; Hawksley Wheels for example drove 43 troughs and employed 56 men whereas the Moscar wheel drove only three. On average over the whole five rivers there were about four mills to the mile. This was a stark proof of the power of water with a source high in the hills. One wonders how long it will be before global warming encourages this water power back into use!



Rivers and some mills around Sheffield

The key period for the water powered industry in the Sheffield area was the century after 1680. By 1785 all available sites on the five rivers were developed and in certain places, notably on the Don, multiple mills had been built on existing sites. The mills on the Sheaf include earlier sites than the other rivers.

We do not know where Benjamin lived or worked except that it was in the parish of Norton, Derbyshire. That was the parish where most scythemakers lived and worked. We have no inventories or wills of Benjamin to learn of his scale but Hey publishes several in "The Rural Metalworkers of the Sheffield Region." Hey says that the Blythes of Norton Lees were the outstanding family in the trade. In 1631 Blythe died

with 1900 scythes in his inventory. Blythe was obviously renting equipment to smiths or grinders who were producing scythes for him.

Benjamin and Mary had nine children, three in Cuckney and six after they had moved to Norton. In the next chapter we concentrate on Benjamin's third son, John(2), who lived at Walk Mill.

John(2) had a brother Mark who was five years younger than John. He was also a scythesmith. There is no doubt that having changed the families course by leaving glass and moving to scythes, Benjamin set a trend which lasted for many generations. John(2)'s will, as we shall see in the next chapter is a brief and simple document. Mark also left a will when he died in 1795. Mark put a lot of thought into his.