

GODFREY BERRY AND THOMAS WRIGLEY
- TWO PIONEERS OF EARLY URBAN HUDDERSFIELD
by **David Griffiths**

***Introductory note (by Gordon):** Godfrey Berry is the great-great-great grandfather of Gordon - his son Godfrey had 4 sons, two of whom emigrated to the USA and Canada; the other two remained in Huddersfield: Gordon's great grandfather Edward sold the brewery and much of the other property in the 1880s; Gordon's grandfather Alfred Edward (who married Fanny Albinia Murgatroyd) also lived most of his life in Huddersfield. Gordon's father Henry Vernon also had four sons, 2 of whom emigrated to America (North and South), and moved from Huddersfield to Dewsbury (10 miles away) in 1943, when Gordon was nearly 3 years old.*

David met and showed us around Huddersfield in a one-day visit at the end of December 2007 - Some pictures taken then of the houses and memorials of the two Godfrey Berry's are included at the end of the text.

GODFREY BERRY (1756-1829) and his son-in-law Thomas Wrigley (1789-1848) were two pioneering figures in Huddersfield's early urban history. Their lives spanned the dramatic century of Huddersfield's growth, from a small straggling village of the mid-18th century to a major industrial town by the time of the Great Exhibition.

Father and son-in-law had much in common, beyond their family ties. Both were stalwarts of the parish church and of the Commissioners for Lighting, Watching and Cleansing the town, who from 1820 to 1848 constituted Huddersfield's first 'municipal' institution. Both were businessmen - Godfrey with fingers in many pies, Thomas less so, for he was primarily a doctor. Though less well-known than some of their leading contemporaries, such as Richard Oastler or even Joseph Kaye, their lives - interesting in their own right - have much to tell us about Huddersfield's century of rapid change.

HUDDERSFIELD IN 1756 "was still really a small village" (Redmonds, 1992). And out on its "fringe" was the separate hamlet of Deighton, where Godfrey Berry was born, his baptism at St Peter's, Huddersfield taking place on 18 April 1756.¹ Deighton was a small farming settlement, and Godfrey's father John, although described only as a maltster in his 1787 will², was evidently also a substantial farmer there, presumably growing barley to feed the maltkiln. He and his wife Jane Elswick had four sons, of whom Godfrey was the youngest, and two daughters.

As well as farming on his own account, John Berry was a substantial landlord, no doubt holding land under the Thornhill estate and sub-letting it. From his will, we can see that he left his own house and farm to the eldest son John (1746-1826). The next two sons, Joseph (1752-?) and Joshua (1754-1829) had already received "what I think is a sufficient preferment for them ... to the utmost of what I intended", and gained no further inheritance when their father died on 5 March 1787. The daughters Martha (1749-?) and Mary (dates unknown) received nine tenanted cottages at Deighton and land at Crosland Moor, plus £200³ to build six more. And Godfrey, significantly for the future, inherited - with his brother John - the malt kiln and its appurtenances at Deighton.

Godfrey was 31 when his father died, and was of course already making his own way in life. At least from 1784 to 1809, we know that he was a tallow chandler.⁴ In the early 1780s he had married Elizabeth (also known as Betty) Walker (1761/2-1813), the youngest of four daughters of Joseph Walker of Middleton, south of Leeds. She brought to the marriage part shares in farm properties at Morley and Gildersome, which she had inherited from her grandfather John Ellis.⁵ These became part of significant land holdings by Godfrey, and his brothers Joseph and John, in what was to become the

heavy woollen district. As well as the Ellis inheritance, various deeds record their interest in land at Morley (1789); further land, a malthouse and maltkiln at Morley (1796); three dwellings at Roberttown (1809); and assorted land, dwellings, warehouses and farm buildings in Liversedge, Heckmondwike and Birstall (1810).⁶

While Godfrey is usually identified in these deeds as a tallow chandler of Huddersfield, the two other brothers appear as farmers (and Joseph also as a tanner) of Liversedge Hall; and in deeds of 1816 and 1824 Godfrey himself is also described in this way.⁷ Perhaps this Spen Valley estate was partly based on the 'preferment' already made by John Berry senior for his son Joseph, noted above. Meanwhile the remaining son, Joshua, had made the most of his 'talents' closer to the parental home in Deighton, where his will of 1825 identifies there farms and some 20 cottages passing to his six children (five Berrys and one 'natural son' with the surname Hirst).⁸

To this point, then, we have a picture of Godfrey as one of an enterprising family which has built up substantial interests in farming, in related trades such as tanning, chandling and malting, and in residential property, spread from Deighton through Spen to Morley. But alongside this, Godfrey was playing a growing part in the development of Huddersfield, to which we now turn.

APPEARING FIRST as a Huddersfield tallow chandler in a 1784 trade directory, Godfrey's occupations thereafter can be traced in several later directories. In 1805 he is a chandler and maltster (but we know he had the kiln from 1787); in 1814 a corn and flour dealer; in 1816 a miller too; and by 1822 he is also a common (ie wholesale) brewer.⁹ There is an obvious 'downstream' progression here, from the family's farming roots to the industrial production of beer, a commodity no doubt in fast-growing demand as the town burgeoned - the population of Huddersfield township having grown more than fourfold from an estimated 3000 in 1778 to a Census figure of over 13,000 in 1821 (Whomsley, 1984).

It was also in 1784 that Godfrey's Huddersfield property interests began to develop. On 1 April he leased from the Ramsden estate a plot of land south of the butchers' shambles and slaughterhouse. These then stood on the east side of New St, where King St now joins it - and from 1784 New St is his address in the directories. It was indeed 'new', its development having begun with the erection of the Brick Buildings (still standing between the HSBC and Nat West banks) by the Ramsden estate in 1770, followed by the shambles in about 1772. Godfrey presumably spotted an area 'on the up' and by 1797, when the 1784 deed as registered - but more likely straight after he had leased it, given the New St address in the 1784 directory - he had put up a "dwelling house with outbuildings". This may well have been a substantial Georgian house, including "windows, cellar windows and bow windows".¹⁰ From the evidence of the directories and other records, it seems to have served as both business premises and family home - an 'establishment' in the terminology of the day - until Godfrey's death in 1829.

As a family home it would need to have been substantial: between 1783 and 1802 Elizabeth Berry gave birth to 12 children, of whom three died in infancy or childhood but nine survived to adulthood.

Behind the house, the leased land included a plot which became known as Berry's Yard. In their *Discovering Old Huddersfield*, Gordon & Enid Minter (2002) describe how:

The beginnings of three of New Street's yards can be traced back to the 1770s when Godfrey Berry, George Lockwood and Edward Hawxby became tenants-at-will of just over one rood of land each. Their holdings ran side-by-side down the hillside from New St to where Victoria Lane would be developed in the future. Godfrey Berry, in time, built a house ...and the land behind developed into Berry's Yard. The yard, which like its near neighbours had a narrow passage entrance, was never as important or busy as the other two. It had no direct exit into Victoria Lane and housed no more than three businesses at any time. (pp27-28)

The Minters may be right that there was a tenancy-at-will before the 1784 lease, but in my view they misjudge the value of the location. Berry's Yard, unlike the others, had no need of an exit to Victoria Lane, because after the shambles and slaughterhouse had been moved to the future market site in the early 19th century, King St was driven through to Shore Head and Berry's Yard acquired a frontage onto it. [Map?]

Several historians have placed this redevelopment around 1807 - for example Redmonds (1982) and Law (1992). I believe it was a little earlier. Certainly King St does not appear in the Ramsden rentals for 1798. There is then a frustrating gap in the rental series until 1807, by which time there are at least seven rent-paying properties, growing to 17 in 1815, when the street appears almost complete.¹¹ This suggests that development may have gone ahead at a steady pace from 1800, when the *original* Methodist chapel was opened on the present site of W H Smiths (opposite the site of the 1819 building which is now the LBT)¹². Certainly in 1802 the Ramsdens leased a parcel of land in 'King St' to William Horsfall¹³.

Godfrey Berry himself apparently played a significant part in developing King Street, In his well-known articles on 'Huddersfield 70 years ago', published in the *Examiner* in 1878, 'Native' - though also placing the Shambles relocation c.1807 - states flatly that "Godfrey Berry and Dr Wrigley built the houses which stand on the [south] side at the top of King Street."¹⁴ (We will come back to Dr Wrigley below.) The rentals show that Godfrey Berry's annual rent for 'New St' tripled from £16/0/0 in 1798/9 to £50/4/0 in 1807/8, settling at £48/13/0 thereafter, which again implies that the development was complete by 1807. And from Godfrey's will of 1829, we know that by then the King St properties comprised 14 dwellings (with 5 privies!), 3 warehouses, 1 shop (workshop?), 2 stables, 2 malthouses, an 'old candle house', gig house, garden privy and yards. Some of the latter items of course reflect Godfrey's own businesses, but most of this property had sitting tenants.

There is some evidence that Berry undertook property transactions elsewhere in the town, including the development of a plot on the West side of nearby Market Place in 1804.¹⁵ But his other significant business interest was the New Town Brewery. New Town was developed at the north end of the town from about 1797 (Minter & Minter, n.d.), but Godfrey did not acquire land for his brewery until 1822, when he leased it from Joseph Rushforth of Elland, who owned the Bay Hall estate.¹⁶ The brewery occupied a triangular plot between Oxford St, Green St and (later on) Viaduct St [map?] - the shape is preserved in the present building on the site (with Oxford St now the one-way outward lane of Bradford Road), which is in multiple commercial occupancy. With the land came rights to draw water "from a certain spring or well of water near thereto" - could this be the spring later exploited by Ben Shaws? By 1829 (again drawing on Godfrey's will) the New Town property comprised a dwelling house and three cottages, brewhouse, maltkiln, vats and other utensils, stable and other buildings. Baines' *Directory* of 1822 lists Berry as one of five brewers in the town, including the better-known Timothy Bentley. While not on the scale of Bentley's, Berry's brewery was sufficient to establish

something of a family brewing dynasty (see below).

GODFREY BERRY had an active public as well as a business and a family life. He was certainly an active member of the Church of England. The Huddersfield parish church records are patchy, but we know that he was a churchwarden in 1812/13 (Ahier, 1948-50). In that capacity he supervised the building of six cottages at South Parade (now buried by the ring road near the top of Manchester Road). As the Minters (2002) describe it:

On the left hand side of the ring road ... there is a small stone structure built to display a bronze plaque and a stone tablet which were preserved when the property they commemorated was demolished. The stone tablet records the erection of dwelling houses in 1812, under the immediate direction and superintendence of Godfrey Berry, for the purpose of supporting an organist and choir of singers in the Parish Church of Huddersfield.

He appears regularly in St Peter's vestry records from 1815 to 1827, undertaking various aspects of church business.¹⁷ Moreover as a Liversedge Hall farmer in 1816 he was one of numerous trustees acquiring land for "the intended [Anglican] National School at Hightown"¹⁸, which opened in 1821 (Hird, 1985). He and Elizabeth were remembered in a memorial window in St Peter's, and although the stained glass window has been removed a brass memorial plaque remains on the North side of the nave.

A further civic role came with the establishment in 1820 of the Commissioners for Lighting, Watching and Cleansing the town (CLWC), within a radius of 1200 yards from the Market Place. Godfrey was one of the 59 Commissioners named in the 1820 Act, all of whom were required to have personal wealth of at least £1000 (equivalent to some £60,000 today¹⁹) to serve. Some were more assiduous than others, and Godfrey was one of the most active members in the early years, attending 31 meetings and chairing 10 of them between September 1820, when the CLWC first met, and June 1823, when the membership was first refreshed (nine members having died or failed to attend).²⁰ He continued to play an active part, though not quite at the same pitch, until shortly before his death, attending for the last time in December 1828.

His involvement was, however, very much focussed on the lighting aspect of the CLWC's responsibilities, where he saw an opportunity to combine public service with his own entrepreneurial talents.

'Native' in his 1878 article recalled that, 70 years before,

"the streets were all in darkness. People went about at night with hand glass lanterns, and our shops were lighted up with candles or muddy oil lamps. It was then decreed by our authorities" [presumably the Ramsden estate] that our main streets should be lighted up. For this purpose lamp-posts were put down at wide intervals. These were furnished with ... oil lamps which gave a dim, uncertain light, and served only to make darkness visible."²¹

No doubt Godfrey Berry had supplied tallow for some of the candles. But gas street lighting had been introduced in London in 1814 and was spreading rapidly across the country (Chandler & Lacey, 1949). Under the 1820 Act the Huddersfield Commissioners were empowered to provide and fix lamps lit either by oil or gas; to construct a gas works and a network of pipes; and to light the lamps to the extent they deemed

“necessary and proper”. They were also empowered to contract for, but not directly to manufacture, the gas itself.

They took lighting as their top priority. At their first meeting on 8 September 1820 they appointed eight of their number to survey and report on existing lights. Meeting again a week later, they appointed 11 members to report on costs of either oil or gas. Godfrey Berry was a member of both committees. On 6 October a decision was made in favour of gas; a supply contract was agreed on 30 March 1821; the Huddersfield Gas Company came formally into being three days later, on 2 April 1821; and on 5 October 1821 the streets were lit for the first time, an event “celebrated by the town’s people with unusual gaiety”²².

One local gas industry historian describes the Gas Co promoters’ identity as “obscure” (Golisti, 1986). However, according to the CLWC minutes, a key role was played by none other than Godfrey Berry. On 8 December 1820 he is recorded as proposing, “on behalf of the Gas Adjudicators”, a 10-year supply contract. A fortnight later a 7-year contract “with gas company” was agreed, on terms which were eventually confirmed on 30 March 1821. In the meantime nine Commissioners, again including Berry, had been appointed to determine the required number and location of the lamps on 9 February; and their number had been settled at 136 on 23 February.

Prest (1990) interprets all this, cynically but plausibly, as follows:

No sooner was the Act passed than a group of capitalists, headed by Godfrey Berry ... formed a Gas Company ... The proprietors remain a shadowy body, but they appear to have proceeded step by step. First they made sure of their customer. On 22 December 1820 the Town Commissioners resolve to enter into a contract for the purchase of gas. Then, on 2 April 1821, they formed their company.

As we have seen, this was just three days after the contract was confirmed - and all this notwithstanding the 1820 Act’s clear provision against conflicts of interest:

Nor shall any person be capable of acting as a Commissioner in the execution of this Act, in any case wherein he shall be personally interested, nor while he holds any Place of Profit or is interested in any Contract or Contracts under this Act.

The gas works itself was erected on land leased from the Ramsden estate, on its present site off Leeds Road. Godfrey’s partners in 1821 remain unknown but in 1828, when the contract was renewed, three Directors are named in the CLWC minutes as Joseph Brook, John Booth and Joseph Kaye - Booth and Kaye also being Commissioners.²³

This was evidently a hectic period for Godfrey (who was 65), as the formation of the gas company in 1821 was followed by the brewery in 1822. However, Betty had died in 1813, and the youngest child (Godfrey junior) reached 19 in 1821, so perhaps home life by this time had few attractions or responsibilities.

As well as gas, Godfrey Berry reputedly made an unsuccessful attempt to improve the water supply to the growing town. As ‘Native’ told the tale in 1878:

Godfrey Berry, a maltster and miller of New Street, a leading man in the town ... proposed a scheme whereby a larger supply of water might be obtained. His project was as follows. A large reservoir was to be constructed in the Old Market

Place, into which the Bradley Spout water was to be brought. Then there were to be four pumps, one at each corner of the Market Place, from which the people might fetch water. Well, Godfrey and his colleagues set to work with a right good will ... A large hole was dug ... built round and arched over, and when all was over they made the astonishing discovery that water would not run up-hill. The project was therefore dropped.²⁴

This tale has been repeated verbatim by later historians, including Sykes (1898), Woodhead (1939) and the Minters (2002). The arched reservoir certainly existed, and was revealed in 1906 when the public toilets were installed (there is a photograph in Woodhead, 1939). However, I have found no contemporary evidence of Godfrey's involvement in the project, and his other ventures do not suggest that he was an impractical man. It would be good to know more about this episode.

WHATEVER THE TRUTH of Godfrey Berry's 'water adventure', there is no doubt that - as we shall see below - water supply was one of the many interests of his son-in-law, Thomas Wrigley.

Thomas was born in Almondbury [to check] in 1789, his parents being James and Elizabeth Wrigley (nee Kenworthy). He trained as a medic and started his practice as a surgeon and apothecary in 1810. The trade directories of 1814 to 1822 record him at Cow/Beast Market, but in 1824 he moved to New Buildings, Queen Street. These were indeed newly erected and were one of the first buildings in Queen St apart from the new (1819) Methodist Chapel.²⁵ I believe they are probably the building now occupied by MyMou bar and the Sony shop, close to the corner of King St. In 1833 he applied unsuccessfully for the post of surgeon at the Infirmary, newly established in 1831²⁶, but remained in private practice in Queen St until he died in 1849 - though possibly moving to the handsome terrace at the other end of the street (again still standing, of course) once it was built in the 1830s.²⁷

In October 1815 he married Christiana Berry (1791-1858), the 6th child of Godfrey and Elizabeth, and they went on to have three sons and two daughters of their own.²⁸ One can imagine the rapidly developing town centre being a small world, in which it would be easy for young members of leading families to meet. But the links between the Berrys and Wrigleys do seem to have been particularly close. Christiana's younger sister Harriet (b.1797), the 9th Berry child, married Thomas's nephew Robert Wrigley. And Thomas was regularly involved in Berry family business, acting as trustee of the estates of Godfrey's brother Joshua and witnessing the will of his brother John.²⁹ This closeness perhaps coloured 'Native's' memories in 1878, when he referred to the King St houses as having been built by Berry and Wrigley (see above) - but as they were built by 1807, when Thomas was only 18, his involvement seems very unlikely.

There was certainly much overlap between the *public* activities of the two men. Thomas was another active vestry-man, appearing in vestry minutes at least between 1820 and 1835, a churchwarden in 1825/6 and a trustee of a parish charity.³⁰ Like Godfrey Berry he is memorialised in the parish church, as a "much respected" surgeon.

In 1823, when its membership was first refreshed, he was one of nine new recruits to the CLWC (which co-opted to fill vacancies). He immediately became a very active member and remained so until the CLWC was wound up in 1848 (unlike Godfrey's son John Berry, a maltster at New St according to the 1822 directory, who was appointed at the same time but rarely attended). Over these 25 years Wrigley chaired nearly 70

meetings, attended many more, and was in my judgement the most active of all the Commissioners (only the cloth merchant Thomas Kilner Jnr coming close for consistency and longevity of involvement).

In contrast, moreover, to his father-in-law's arguably self-interested focus on street lighting, Thomas's interests ranged across the full range of the CLWC's functions. He did take an active interest in lighting, undertaking in several years to superintend the repair of lamps before the winter lighting season and serving on committees to agree the location of new lamps and to fix the hours of lighting. In 1826 he was deputed to press the Gas Co for speedy action to lay new pipes in Manchester Rd, and from 1837 he was regularly involved in renegotiating the gas contract as it came up for renewal. Before that he had often been asked to check the Gas Co's annual bill, and small deductions were sometimes made to reflect failures in the company's performance.

But he was also very concerned with the cleansing function. In February 1824 he was one of a committee appointed to survey the town's footpaths, cellar lids, flaps and rates for obstructions and other nuisances - apparently the first time the Commissioners had taken an interest in their regulatory functions under the 1820 Act. Twenty years later he was still pursuing nuisances as a member of a joint committee with the ratepayer-elected Board of Highway Surveyors. And from 1838 he was periodically on of the committee which supervised the scavenging (ie street cleaning) function; the actual work was contracted out to paupers from the workhouse.



(From right) John, David, Mary and ????



City center - water supply - public toilets



Plaque in St. Peter's commemorating windows, Godfrey Sr. & wife, and Edward (his grandson) & wife.

- ⁴ *Bailey's Northern Directory*, 1784; *Holden's Triennial Directory*, 1805-07; ditto, 1807-09 - all reproduced in E J Law, *Essays in Local History*, v.1, typescript at HLSL.
- ⁵ Walker family and property information from WY Registry of Deeds, Wakefield, CO669/912.
- ⁶ WY Registry of Deeds, DB27/27, DW133/145, FI497/598 and FK669/832 respectively.
- ⁷ WY Registry of Deeds, DB36/36 and HU724/721.
- ⁸ Borthwick Institute, 180/128.
- ⁹ *Holden*, 1805-07; *Pigott's Directory*, 1814-15; ditto, 1816-17 (these reproduced in Law, op. cit. vols. 1,3, & 4); *Baines' Directory*, 1822, in HLSL and at <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/YKS/WRY/Huddersfield/index.html> .
- ¹⁰ WY Registry of Deeds, DZ92/114.
- ¹¹ WYAS Kirklees, DD/RE/r.
- ¹² Personal communication from Brian Haigh, Huddersfield University Archives.
- ¹³ WYAS Kirklees, DD/R/dd/7/55.
- ¹⁴ *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 24 May 1878.
- ¹⁵ WY Registry of Deeds, EQ590/747.
- ¹⁶ WY Registry of Deeds, HO313/309.
- ¹⁷ 1815 Huddersfield rate book, at WYAS Kirklees; Churchwardens' minute book, WYAS Wakefield, WDP32/89.
- ¹⁸ WY Registry of Deeds, GL36/36.
- ¹⁹ This and the calculation in note 3 use the Composite Price Index from O'Donoghue, Goulding and Allen (2004), 'Consumer Price Inflation Since 1750', at <http://www.safalra.com/other/cumulative-uk-inflation>. However, while adjusting for price inflation converts historic sums to their equivalent in current purchasing power, it makes no allowance for two centuries of economic growth. Clearly somebody with wealth of £60k in today's money was far wealthier in 1820, relative to the society of their time, than somebody with £60k today. A further ten-fold adjustment probably gives a reasonable sense of their true position.
- ²⁰ Details about the CLWC are from their minute book, in the Huddersfield Borough collection, WYAS Kirklees, unless otherwise noted.
- ²¹ *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 31 May 1878.
- ²² *Wakefield & Halifax Journal*, 5 October 1821, quoted by Golisti (1986).
- ²³ The gas works provided a start in business for another and greater Huddersfield entrepreneur, Read Holliday, whose chemical business began in 1830 when he set up next door to the gas works to utilise the by-products - see Griffiths (2002).
- ²⁴ *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 31 May 1878.
- ²⁵ Ramsden rentals, WYAS Kirklees, DD/RE/r.
- ²⁶ Infirmary papers, WYAS Kirklees, KC311/18/12.
- ²⁷ He is listed at 32 Queen St in *White's Directory* of 1837 (at <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/YKS/WRY/Huddersfield/index.html>) and the poll book for the 1847 Borough election at HLSL. No 32 is now the end house in the terrace south of the Court House, which the town's architectural historians place in the 1830s.
- ²⁸ Genealogical facts from Thomas's will (see next note), Censuses and information from a living relative, Linda Wrigley.
- ²⁹ Borthwick Institute, 180/128 and 174/191.
- ³⁰ WYAS Wakefield, WDP32/89; Ahier (1948-50).