

## The Brewin Brothers of Cirencester

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By the kind assistance of Mr. Harold Tempest, Librarian of the Bingham Public Library, of Cirencester, the following article has been traced to the issue of the *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard*, of 14 May, 1921. It was written by "Rambler" (Mr. W. Scotford Harmer). It recalls in a familiar manner the memory of three interesting characters.

THE brothers Brewin differed widely in their views and opinions, but they were alike in their desire and endeavour to promote the well-being of those among whom they lived. *Robert* was a staunch Conservative in politics—he subscribed liberally to the party funds, and though he took no active part in public affairs, yet when the Ballot Act abolished the hustings elections, his name usually appeared on the nomination paper of the candidate. Further, he was a believer in and a follower of the comfortable and comforting apostolic advice which counsels the taking of "a little wine for the stomach's sake." *Thomas*, on the other hand, was an outspoken and uncompromising Liberal, who would in plain and direct language enforce the claims of the man of his choice from the hustings on nomination day, and he was an ardent teetotaller and temperance reformer. *William*, perhaps, came between the two, for he was a man of quiet and retiring habits and what his views were on political and social questions has not been handed down.

### ROBERT BREWIN, 1805-1889

MR. ROBERT BREWIN was a man of means who carried on business probably from a liking for old associations. He was a coal merchant and his counting house was at the back of his private residence, what is now called Querns-lane House. He carried on the trade up to quite late in life, when he devoted himself to what was the chief occupation of his declining years, the prevention of cruelty to, and the promotion of the humane treatment of animals. This was an object he pursued with untiring generosity, and enthusiasm. For some reason or other he was not enamoured of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, so he started an independent association for operation in the

portions of Wilts. and Gloucester around Cirencester and appointed an inspector whom he induced the Courts of Quarter Sessions of the two counties to have sworn as a police constable. For many years he bore the expense of this admirable work practically unaided and by his will provided for its continuance so that the present Cirencester Independent Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, together with the drinking troughs at various places in the town, is a monument to his practical benevolence.

By the way, there is one sphere of the considerate treatment of animals to which Mr. Robert Brewin devoted much earnest attention which now seems to have become obsolete—the exposure of shorn sheep. Sheep jackets were devised and Mr. Brewin used to provide, at cost price, a woollen jacket of undoubted warmth.

Mr. Robert Brewin might frequently be seen engaged in his counting-house, though more often he was to be found in his own cosy and comfortable room, whence he seldom stirred in wintry weather, for he was not of robust health. Customers who repaired to the counting-house were proffered a jug of ale as a refresher, while business visitors to the private room found themselves invited to a glass of sherry by Mrs. Brewin, a delightfully comely old lady, diminutive but plump, and the very embodiment of goodness, good nature and good temper. Her husband, a sparely built man, rather above middle height, having a slight stoop, usually dressed in garments of pepper and salt mixture, and one of his peculiarities was to have his coats cut in the old-fashioned pigeon-tail style. His thickly-growing iron-grey hair was cut short and stood up in bristles all over his head. His eyes were keen and kindly—a plain index of his shrewd and sympathetic character.

When Mr. and Mrs. Brewin took the air, they usually drove abroad in a low pony carriage accompanied by a comfortable-looking man-servant, who sat in the dickey, the picture of prosperous content. Mrs. Brewin drove—or rather held the reins, for the ponies were allowed to go their own pace.

#### THOMAS BREWIN, 1809-1878

MR. THOMAS BREWIN'S horsemanship was of a different and more independent type. Of tall and singularly spare—

not to say lank—figure, he was a man of much more active habits than his brother, and was to be seen daily walking in the streets of the town, interesting himself in current events and conferring with his friends on public questions. He used to vary walking with horse-exercise—that is to say, he used to ride a small pony, and as he shared Mr. Robert's views on the treatment of animals, the pony never went beyond a walking pace. A trot or a canter might have been disastrous, though, to be sure, the pony's legs were so short and its rider's legs were so long that Mr. Brewin could practically touch the ground on both sides.

As I have said, Mr. Thomas Brewin was an ardent teetotaller and temperance reformer, but for all his ascetic appearance he had a shrewd sense of humour. He had a great admiration for the game of skittles—an admiration not at all derived from personal experience. As he walked along Lewis Lane, which led to his own and his brothers' residences, he often heard cheering and shouts of laughter, emanating from the skittle alley of the Bull Inn, and used to say that, judged by the amount of enjoyment that it appeared to provide for its participants, he should think skittles was the most fascinating game ever invented, and he greatly regretted that it appeared to be inextricably mixed up with drink.

#### WILLIAM BREWIN, 1813-1882

MR. WILLIAM BREWIN, who owned and occupied the pleasant residence called "Birchfield" from 1881[?], the date of the death of his brother Thomas, having previously resided in Chesterton Terrace, was a man whose opinions and convictions were his own concern, though no doubt they were firmly held. His chief claim to distinction lay in the fact that in early life he was something of a traveller. I believe he was, in fact, a member of one or two of those foreign missions of benevolence and philanthropy which it has been the glory of the Friends to institute for the benefit of suffering humanity at various stages of the world's troubles. When he came back, his stay-at-home friends naturally thought his travels were something of an achievement and they desired that he should describe what he had seen for the benefit of his Ciceter neighbours. Accordingly a lecture was arranged, when Mr. Brewin gave a faithful account of his not very

exciting experiences. An interesting feature of the lecture was the fact that it evidently had been carefully rehearsed in the family circle that the other members of the family were even more familiar with the text than the author himself, for every now and then the lecturer would accidentally miss some point or incident, when Mr. Thomas Brewin would interpose: "Brother William, thee has forgotten something. When thee was at So-and-so, such-and-such a thing happened," or "Brother William, thee has left out thy visit to So-and-So." Whereupon the lecturer would suavely reply: "I thank thee, brother Thomas," and proceed to rectify the omission indicated.

Each brother married but there were no descendants.

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### An Early Marriage Certificate, 1675

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Richard Scorier of Southwarke in the County of Surrey Schoolmaster the 23<sup>th</sup> day of y<sup>e</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> month in y<sup>e</sup> yeare 1675 in an Assembly of y<sup>e</sup> People of God called Quakers at their meeting place at Horslydowne in y<sup>e</sup> County of Surrey did Sollomnly in y<sup>e</sup> feare of God take Frances ffrith of y<sup>e</sup> same place Widdow to be his wife and She the Said ffrances ffrith did then and there in like manner take y<sup>e</sup> said Richard Scorier to be her husband each of y<sup>m</sup> promising [&c] in y<sup>e</sup> Presence of

Mathew Scorier

William ffrith

Ellis Hookes

Thomas Padley

Gilbert Hutton

Anthony Tomkins

Jewell Guy

John Baker

Joseph Swallow

Joshua Sparrow

Robert Pate

John Deeble

James Craven

John Dodson

Henry Jefferson

Jasper Robins

John Dowden

John Clarke

John feild

Jone ffallee

Eve Panley

Ellen Panley

Mary Hawley

Mary ffrith

Elizabeth Whatley

Sarah Millman

Anne Hutson

Ellina Packer

Anne Welsh

Taken from the Minutes of Southwark M.M. vol. i. In D.