

A FORGOTTEN BOOK ON EARLY GLOUCESTERSHIRE PATENT HISTORY

by HUGH TORRENS

I recently purchased a slim quarto volume of (iii +) 63 (+4) pages bound in original green cloth, whose title page read simply OLD TIME INVENTION in the Four Shires (Gloucester, Worcester, Warwick and Oxford) by Percy C. Rushen. It gave absolutely no information of where, when or by whom it was printed or published.



The book soon revealed itself as a very complete summary of all patents up to 1810 taken out by any inhabitant of the four shires mentioned, starting with one dated 3 March 1693 (Patent No. 315) granted to John Hadley of Worcester, engineer for motive power obtained ... from water, and concluding with that of 8 October 1810 (Patent No. 3393) granted to Edward Griffith of Bristol esquire for soap manufacture. Since the shires include Gloucester, the book also contains a complete analysis of early patents taken out in Bristol and the neighbourhood. The 63 pages of text are in small newspaper type set in two columns (and thus a lot of words) per page, the final unnumbered 4 pages providing separate indices of places, persons and subjects.

Enquiries showed the book was not available in any American library (to judge by the National Union Catalogues) nor the Science Museum or Science Reference Libraries in London. Enquiries at county level revealed the following:

Gloucestershire. (1 copy located)

Not listed in R. Austin CATALOGUE OF THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE COLLECTION (1928) in the Gloucester Public Library, nor in E. R. N. Mathews BRISTOL BIBLIOGRAPHY (1916) nor in Bristol Reference Library catalogues. E. W. Hulme's (1859-1954) presentation copy was acquired by the Gloucester Public Library after 1928.

Worcestershire. (3 copies)

Copies are held at Evesham and Worcester libraries, and at the County Record Office.

Warwickshire. (1 copy)

Not held by Warwick Library nor by the county library; not held by Stratford-on-Avon Library nor the County Record Office. There is a single copy in Birmingham Public Library (CATALOGUE of the BIRMINGHAM COLLECTION at Birmingham Reference Library - supplement 1918-1931 p 725) catalogued as (1912).

Oxfordshire. (1 copy)

Copy in the Bodleian Library, Oxford press mark 1771 d 17. Catalogued as (1916) as in the BRITISH LIBRARY, London Catalogue entry, where a seventh copy is held.

This brief and obviously incomplete survey only underlines the book's excessive rarity. It seems never to have been cited by any writers on the industrial history of these counties or of Bristol, so it is hoped the following notes will help to publicise its existence and usefulness.

The author, Percy Charles Rushen, features in the British Library and National Union Catalogues as author of, or contributor to, 10 separate publications. Three relate to Patents, including OLD TIME INVENTION, and three others relate to the history of Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire. Rushen was born in about 1875 and his earliest connections seem to have been with Woodbridge in Suffolk, where his first two books on Chipping Campden were also published in 1899 and c. 1905. His mother's grandfather was a Woodbridge artist and land-surveyor called Isaac Johnson (1754-1835), (see NOTES AND QUERIES (9) 3 p 109, 1899, and Rushen's Will).

By 1899 when he was living at 12 Fentiman Road, London SW, he had acquired a close Gloucestershire connection. In a letter of 15 June 1899 (owned by Seumas Stewart of Chipping Campden) he reveals he had an uncle then living there. This was Joseph Richardson - baker and mealman - to whom the second edition of his HISTORY ... OF CHIPPING CAMPDEN (1911) was dedicated. The first edition, of 1899, already records the "many happy times he had spent there" and explains how his knowledge of Gloucestershire's history was initiated.

Rushen's other special interest was in patents. In one of his three major contributions to the literature of patents - his contribution on 'The Records of Patented Inventions'

to the GENEALOGISTS POCKET LIBRARY vol 5 edited by W. Bradbrook and published in 1909 - he records on p 96 that he was himself a chartered Patent Agent and gives his work address as 10 Warwick Court, High Holborn, London WC. The Assistant Secretary of the Chartered Institute of Patent Agents tells me (in a letter of 13 September 1982) that Rushen passed the qualifying examination in 1902, was registered as a patent agent in 1907 and was made a Fellow of the Institute soon afterwards. He had ceased to practice as a patent agent by 1934. Rushen presented 10 papers to the Chartered Institute of Patent Agents over these years and he also published a CRITICAL STUDY of the FORM OF LETTERS PATENT FOR INVENTIONS (124 pages) in 1908. Mr. R. C. Noyes, of the patent agents Haseltine Lake & Co., London WC2, a firm for which Rushen worked from 1921 to 1930, tells me Rushen was also an expert on the legal aspects of leasehold and copyhold tenure.

In 1927 he joined the Society of Genealogists and was elected a Fellow in 1928. He was still living in London during the early years of the Second World War, but in "an air raid of the early years of the war he lost most of his papers which was a severe blow to him" (C. D. P. Nicholson's obit. in the Genealogists Magazine, December 1962 p 4.) He was then evacuated with his sister to the Oxfordshire village of Charlbury where he spent the remainder of his life. He died suddenly on 14 June 1962 at 4 Crawborough Terrace aged 87 and was buried at Charlbury on 18 June (Oxford Mail of 16 June 1962, The Times 19 June 1962 and gravestone).

OLD TIME INVENTION seems to have been the last as well as one of the scarcest of Rushen's publications. At least two of his books - on the monumental inscriptions of a London church (1904) and the transcript of the parish registers of Letheringham, Suffolk (1901) - were however printed in editions of only 50 copies. The former of these he "printed at his private press" himself! (Notes & Queries (11) 2 p 492 1910) The only library catalogue to offer bibliographic details of OLD TIME INVENTION is that of the Birmingham Reference Library which states the book was reprinted from a series of articles in the Evesham Journal of 1911-1912, and that the book was published in Evesham in 1912 (obviously from the same type as the original newspaper articles). This is based on an inscription in this copy by E. A. B. Barnard, the Evesham historian, which reads "These articles were all published in my Notes and Queries column in the Evesham Journal 1911-1912 E.A.B.B. Nov. 1912". Just to complicate matters these dates have all been added subsequently by Barnard to the inscription. Reference to the Evesham Journal shows Rushen's articles in fact appeared as a series of 46 from the issues of 11 Nov. 1911 (Notes & Queries No. 273) to 13 Dec. 1913 (Notes & Queries No. 377). But the place of publication as Evesham is confirmed by the copy in a different binding held at Evesham Library. This both contains a compliments slip from W & H Smith Ltd, The Journal Press, Evesham, who were also publishers of the local newspaper The Evesham Journal & Four Shires Advertiser, and has their name printed on the front cover. It is in different brown paper covered boards and this forms a second style of original binding to the book. Seumas Stewart tells me the second edition

of Rushen's HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES OF CHIPPING CAMPDEN of 1911 was again reprinted by this same firm from a series of articles in the Evesham Journal of 1909-1910. Evesham is only eight miles northwest of Campden.

As for the date of publication, we have seen the Birmingham Public Library copy must be misdated, as the last article in the original series was only issued in December 1913. The Bodleian copy settles the date as it is a presentation copy given in 1920 and inscribed in Rushen's characteristic handwriting on the title page "published October 1916". This is the month also found in an inscription Rushen has added to the Worcester Public Library copy which is dated 28 October 1916.

His family connections explain his interest in all aspects of Chipping Campden's history; this is again revealed in the pages of OLD TIME INVENTION. In this he identifies one Cotswold inventor called Richard Lumbert as perhaps the man of the same name buried there in 1816. Lumbert took out two patents and the relevant entries are given here:

Patent No. 2373, dated 4 February, 1800,
was granted to Richard Lumbert, of the
parish of Wick Rissington, co. Glouc. gent.,
for

"Various Additions to and Improvements of the Plough or Machine for the Draining of Lands by means whereof the many Disadvantages attending the Ploughs or Machines heretofore used are obviated in a very simple and perfect Manner."

The most noticeable of these improvements is a design for a winding frame to be anchored in the ground and provided with chains, drains and crank handles by which manual labour could be caused to draw the plough through the grounds.

Perhaps this Mr. Lumbert was the same Richd. Lumbert to whom there is an altar tomb in the churchyard at Campden, Glos. d. 1816, aged 65.

No. 2897, 23 November, 1805, Richd. Lumbert, of Wick Rissington, co. Glouc., Gent.-
"An Improved Thrashing Machine, and also an Improved Portable Windlass to be worked by Men or one or more Horses, particularly useful for Drawing or Hauling."

Rushen also devotes 6 pages to Campden's most famous inventor, Jonathan Hulls (1699-1758) who first applied a steam engine to the propulsion of ships and patented this idea in 1736, and another patented in 1753. This important discussion of an industrial pioneer has apparently been ignored by all subsequently writing on Hulls. More on both these Campden inventors appears in his 1911 History mentioned above. Benjamin Cox of

Blandford, who worked for a firm of Evesham solicitors who represented Rushen's North Cotswold interests, tells me that Rushen was a later owner of properties in Broad Campden he named Hull's Row, once owned by Jonathan Hulls and rebuilt by Hulls' grandson Richard in 1829. In his will (Principal Probate Registry, London, proved 22 October 1962), Rushen willed "to the town trustees of Chipping Campden the original deed of feoffment of 1727 of (this) property to Jonathan Hulls who should be considered as the inventor of steam navigation as explained in my HISTORY OF CHIPPING CAMPDEN 1911 and my OLD TIME INVENTION in the Four Shires, 1916."

As examples of the sort of entries given for Gloucestershire patentees we can give here the entry for John Wright's patent of 1756:

Patent No. 709, dated 27 May, 1756, was granted to John Wright, of Lower Redbrooke, in the county of Gloucester, refiner, for

"A New Method of Raising Steam for Working Fire Engines."

The latter term was that given to steam engines before the days of Watt and when the steam performed a less active part in the working of the engine than later.

The specification is dated 14 August and was enrolled 16 August, 1756. The "New Method" was really the use of a new boiler which is clearly shown in the drawings accompanying the specification. The boiler was of very peculiar shape - mainly rounded - but it had three special features; in the first place it was longer than it was wide or high; secondly, its bottom was arched and inclined so that the flame should strike against it as with the roof of a reverberatory furnace; and thirdly, after the products of combustion reached the far end of the boiler from the grate they passed along side flues formed between the outside of the boiler and the brickwork setting to a shaft at the grate end. Return flues of this kind were adopted by Watt in his wagon boiler and later became a feature of the popular and useful "Cornish boiler." Before Watt's time, although internal firing had been used, steam boilers remained for many years of circular figure in plan with a dome top. This specification is, so far as the writer can ascertain, the first proposal of the well known side flues, and it therefore appears that John Wright, of Redbrooke, must be considered the inventor of this very useful and important feature.

and that for Robert Ferryman of 1791:

Patent No. 1819, dated 19 July, 1791, was granted to Rob. Ferryman, of Gloucester, Clerk, for -

"Certain Locks acting by Lever toothed Wheel and Drop chiefly without Springs in their Principles, and not liable to be injured by Accident or Friction, particularly applicable to Prisons and to all other Places and Things where Strong Fastenings are requisite."

In this invention several bolts are provided, each freed by a different key, but all worked by a hand lever. It appears that the invention was designed particularly for gaols, for the patentee had been previously approached by the Commissioners for building new gaols in Gloucestershire to devise something stronger, more simple, equally secure, and with better wearing qualities than the gaol fastenings then in use. This was when the Commissioners were about finishing their undertaking, and they were dissatisfied with the old forms of fastening. It seems likely that the inventor would not have gone to the trouble and expense of a Patent if the Commissioners were not satisfied with the invention, so that it is probable the new locks were fitted in the new gaols.

and that for Robert Mason of 1792:

Patent No. 1878, dated 15 May, 1792, was granted to Rob. Mason, of Chipping Sodbury, surgeon and apothecary, for -

"A Medicine for the effectual Extirpation of Worms and their cause from the human body in Persons of all Ages, as also for the Relief and Cure of divers other Complaints and Diseases."

The prescription was -

2lbs. jalap
2lbs. coriander seeds,
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. powder of scammony,
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. powder of box,
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. dulcified mercury,
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. ipecacuum powder,
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Æ thiops minerals,
6ozs. powder of ginger,
12ozs. carraway seeds,
8lbs. lenitive electuary,
lbs. wheat flour,
Treacle to make a dough,
Bake in $\frac{1}{2}$ dram cakes,
Dose 1 cake at night and two in the morning.

This again gives the present generation an insight into the strong measures taken by our forefathers to cure great evils, so strong that

they sometimes seem to be of that character when one thinks that the remedy is as bad as the disease.

Scammony was similar to jalap, lenitive electuary was the old name for Senna confection, dulcified mercury is another name for that form of mercury known as calomel, once so much in favour, and Æthiops minerals was a mixture of mercury and sulphur.

The only published comment I have seen on OLD TIME INVENTION is by Seumas Stewart in his book Book Collecting - a Beginner's Guide, 1979 (266-7), 2nd edition. He calls it "A scarce and unusual book produced early this century" and rightly comments: "probably the book was not published in the ordinary way: it is certainly uncommon ... the paper and printing are poor, the style is dry, but the information is invaluable." He adds a remark with which one can only agree: "It is surprising that so useful a work is still largely ignored by industrial archaeologists!" I think one could claim that it has been wholly ignored. In several years I have seen it for sale in a bookseller's catalogue only once (in 1983 for £34!) and wrongly dated. The only copies I know of to reach auction realised £32 and £34 (lots 172-173 now dated 1928 of the Sheldon, Bosley sale at Moreton in Marsh 4 Feb. 1981). Undoubtedly a major factor in the book's rarity today was its unfortunate date of publication, during the First World War. Probably any surviving copies were destroyed with the author's papers during the Second World War.

The local history of patents is an undeservedly neglected field generally. The nearest equivalent in book form is R. B. Prosser's much better known BIRMINGHAM INVENTORS AND INVENTIONS, 1881 - being a contribution to the Industrial History of Birmingham privately printed in an edition limited to 50 copies. It was reprinted like OLD TIME INVENTION from previously published newspaper articles. Sadly because both are so rare Rushen did not know about Prosser's earlier book and when Asa Briggs came to write the foreword to the 1970 reprint of Prosser's book (published by S. R. Publishers Ltd., East Ardsley, Wakefield) he knew nothing of Rushen's book which also covers Birmingham! If Rushen's most useful book could be reprinted it would make it available to the wide readership it deserves.

H. S. Torrens © 1983

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For help in answering my queries I thank the staffs of the libraries named, the kind Ludlow bookseller for finding the book for me in the first place, and particularly Anthony Camp (London), Benjamin G. Cox (Blandford), Margaret Green (Warwick), Helen F. Ladd (Worcester), R. C. Noyes (London), Michael Ralph (London), Eric Robinson (Oxford), Seumas Stewart (Chipping Campden) and Tony Woolrich (Bridgwater).

H.S.T.