

"DEAR MUSHET"

Part Two of a History of the Whitecliff Ironworks in the Forest of Dean, 1808-1810

by I.J. Standing

The first part of the history of the Whitecliff Ironworks published by the present author (1) traced events from 1798 to 1808 by which time they were owned by Teague and Co. As noted in that account, the information available to earlier researchers and writers had been very limited. In 1970 a collection of 170 letters to David Mushet was discovered (2) and by the generous consent of their owner, Miss G.M. Pye-Smith, was deposited in the Gloucestershire Records Office under reference D2646. Over half of them cover the period 1808 to 1810 and were written to David Mushet by Thomas Halford. They relate to the Whitecliff Ironworks and contain a mass of additional material dealing with collieries, tramroads and other matters both in and beyond Dean Forest. But the letters convey far more than local historical fact; for they permit an insight, via the hands of their writers, into the character and personalities of themselves and other parties.

The letters vividly illustrate the expectations of rich capitalists in pursuit of the mineral wealth of the Dean at the beginning of the 19th century. As such, they relate a one-sided story because the minerals belonged to the crown and through it, in theory at least, to the free miners of the Forest of Dean. Most of the free miners, however, interpreted their privileges and operated their pits on a scale more suited to previous centuries and were thus unprepared to comprehend or to cope with the events about to unfold around them. Only a handful of free miners were operating on a scale sufficient to compete with the capitalists from outside the Dean. Two such men were the Rev. Isaiah Birt and James Teague. Both of them formed partnerships with incoming 'foreigners' and both figure in the present account. The excellent essay by Mr. Chris Fisher on 'The Free Miners of the Forest of Dean, 1800-1841' (3) should be read in conjunction with this account. It deals with the wider issues and their repercussions on the free miners themselves and to the crown.

There is one further bonus provided by this collection of letters - they are addressed to the noted metallurgist David Mushet and contain some copies of his own replies. By 1808 he had become an acknowledged authority on the advancing sciences of geology and metallurgy. He was largely self taught, deriving his knowledge from keen observation and practical experimentation particularly in the field of analysis. His circle of friends and professional acquaintances was wide, and his brother Robert Mushet was employed at the Royal Mint as chief clerk and melter. In 1801 David Mushet had moved from Scotland to Derbyshire (4) where he became a partner at the Alfreton Ironworks. The collection of letters presented here leaves no doubt about the reasons for his decision to leave Alfreton and settle in Coleford.

In preparing this account the present author has had to decipher and transcribe about 100 letters. The majority of them were written by the difficult quill of Thomas Halford, sometimes firm and clear, but at other times almost illegible. As a writer of letters Halford was adept at the omission of words thus leaving the reader to interpret for himself. Worse still, Halford had a habit of hopping from subject to subject and back again in alternate unpunctuated sentences. To ease the path of the modern reader punctuation has been added as has the occasional missing word. The letters, in so far as they relate to the main theme of the Ironworks, are arranged chronologically but in many cases the sheer volume of material has demanded the inclusion only of the most important and interesting detail. Separate chronologically arranged extracts deal with coal works and tramroads. The numbered references supply background information and comment.

The order of presentation is as follows:

1. The introduction of Thomas Halford to David Mushet.
2. The state of the Whitecliff Ironworks in 1808.
3. Introductory notes on the partners and other personalities mentioned in subsequent letters.
4. Changes of partners in 1808.
5. "The Perplexity of Business": October 1808 to September 1809.
6. David Mushet's decision to leave Alfretton, 1809 to 1810.
7. Tramroads: 1808 to 1809.
8. Coal works: 1808 to 1810.
9. Summary and references.

1. The Introduction of Thomas Halford to David Mushet

Wilson Lowry to David Mushet

(Sheffield), March 12th. 1808

My Dear Mushet,

Altho I confess I am one of the worst of bad correspondents I should certainly have written to you long since had I known of anything worth communicatin

I now come to speak of the letter which accompanies this, the writer I believe to be a very worthy man of fortune but not science. Mrs. Lowry and her relations have known him from a boy and they say he may be depended upon. He has for some time past been concerned in an iron work in the Forest of Dean which work, like all others except yours, is, I suppose as badly managed as it can be. He has heard us speak of your great abilities and seems very desirous to have some connection with you, He particularly wishes to know your opinion first on the spot and will be glad to pay you handsomely if you will visit it with him. I sincerely wish it may lead to something advantageous to you...

believe me most sincerely yours

W. Lowry. (5)

2 The State of the Whitecliff Ironworks in 1808

Thomas Halford to David Mushet

London, March 11th, 1808

Sir,

I waited upon Mr Lowry on Wed. last who acquainted me that it was your intention of visiting London in the course of a month and that you would come by way of Gloucester and give me a meeting at our works (Whitecliff). It struck me it would be better for me to give you a meeting at Alfretton but on second thoughts your proposal may answer the same purpose. Perhaps if I were to send you different specimens of our ore & etc. it might enable you to form some idea of our capability of making iron.

Our coal, iron and ironstone, which we use as a flux, we get from the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire and as our materials, I may almost say, are inexhaustible we only require skill to make them productive.

We have been and are using for making one ton of iron, 3½ tons of ore and abt. six tons of coal, sometimes more of the latter when the cokes have not been well made, which has been too much the case, but we have used as little as 5½ tons

of coal and what has once been done may be effected again. Our make for the last two months has averaged about 18 tons per week. We have made as much as 27 but I fear our great error in not producing a greater quantity of iron has arisen from using too much rich ore. As we do not analyse the ores etc. before they are put into the furnace I fear we shall not be able to exceed about 25 tons per week when possibly we might reach 40. We certainly possess great advantages of situation & it would be very desirable to reap the fruits of it. Our coal, when a railroad of abt. $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile is made will cost us 2/6 and the ore 7/- per ton in the furnace yard. We have these last three weeks been altering our system of burdens by taking off $\frac{1}{2}$ the rich ore & using what we conceive some considerably poorer. The furnace certainly works better and makes a greater quantity of cinder.

The iron is uncommonly good. You may judge of its quality when it is used principally for making tin (plates). Our burden now is I believe, 5 tons including the ironstone and Roman cinders, (6) which are used as fluxes and the latter I apprehend may contain more iron than some of our people are aware of, and eight baskets of cokes. As we are making only 18 tons per week of course we are much too slow. We blow with one tuyere through a 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ inch pipe but a new founder who is coming to us next week recommends blowing with two twyers which I suppose will be adopted. We have hitherto roasted most of our ore which our people have of late thought no so good as the limestone it contains in its raw state is an excellent flux but by roasting becomes cold and hard.

I shall take the liberty in the course of a few days of sending you specimens of our ore etc and will esteem it a favour by your giving me your opinion of them. From the above you will perceive that I am no Iron Master but I flatter myself you will excuse inaccuracies.

I remain, Sir
Your very Ob. Servant

Tho. Halford

12 Finch Lane

Cornhill, London.

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TH to DM

London, March 19th, 1808

Sir,

I have to acknowledge the recpt. of your favour of 14th. Inst yesterday morning. I was in hopes before this to have forwarded to you specimens of every material used in our furnace. I hope to be able to send them early next week.

Our last weeks make was 21 tons. The quantity of ore used was 3 ton 17 cwt. and coal 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ tons which I presume is too great a portion of each... Our burden has been considerably altered - the greater part of the rich ore taken by poorer substitution. There is a greater part of cinder in consequence which never could be made before. I have no doubt, when I have the pleasure of your company at Coleford, you will find room for improvement.

The quality of iron we have made has been principally forge and occasionally a casting of foundery which sells for £1 per ton more. We have a refinery, therefore dispose of ours mostly as refined metal, which we have found very serviceable for when the furnace has been out of sorts and white iron made, the mixing it with good grey, all went off at the same price. As our iron is principally used for making tin plates you must be the better judge than myself what kind would be the most profitable for us to make.

We have it in contemplation to erect a forge for making blooms (7) (the engine for which we have had by us this a year past). In the summer when the forges near us are short of water, we could sell a tolerable quantity of blooms when we can't

sell our metal. They might be manufactured as to pay a Londoner a profit. The price for tin blooms is £16 per ton.

Our vein of coal is 4, 5 and 6 feet thick, 1/3 of which we don't coke, being considered too sulphurious. It is the upper vein, therefore timbered up to prevent its mixing with the others. We use 2½ tons of coal to make a ton of coke, but I think if greater care was taken a better yield might be made. We use but little limestone, the poorer ore contains a greater portion of it. It is procured close to the furnace.... I should hope that if we could for constancy make iron with 6 tons of coal, with good management, there would be nothing to fear...

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TH to DM

London. March 22nd 1808

Sir,

Herewith I send the diff't. ores made use of at our works. I believe the burden which is 4½ cwt. consists nearly all of grey ore, the matrix of which is limestone. I think there are six boxes of grey ore and one of brush ore and five boxes of ironstone used as a flux but little of the limestone used. Our furnace keeper say the cokes would bear a greater burden ... In the box is a piece of Swedish ore sent by your brother.

I trust you will be able to gain some good account of our specimens to pronounce that 40 tons of iron may be made with proper management. I am fully aware no great thing can be effected without them. We are certainly very far behind but I hope not too late for improvement.

I strongly suspect our blast is not regular. They have been putting in a back tuyere last week which rather hindered them and of course they did not increase their make but continued the same 21 tons.

I have received vast pleasure and information in reading some of your papers in the Philosophical Magazine by which, I am sorry to find we have been working exactly contrary to every principle they lay down.

I hope I have sent you a sufficient quantity of ore to make experiment. I hope you will favour me with a time when I shall meet you at Coleford and you may depend upon seeing me there.

I remain Sir

Your very Ob. Serv.

Tho. Halford

ps. Coleford is six miles from Monmouth.

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TH to DM

London. April 7th 1808

Sir,

I am sorry I did not give you a more particular direction to Coleford. As you will be at Birmingham, I think there are coaches direct from B. to Gloucester or Ross. From either places chaises may be easily got. We are only distant six miles from Monmouth. I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you on Wed. next.

I intend leaving London on Tues. evening next unless I hear from you to the contrary.

I wish you may be able to put us into a plan for making 1 ton of coal produce 11 cwt of coke. We have a vast quantity of the different ores I sent you except the Pin Ironstone which we get from our coal level. (8) I apprehend that cannot be procured so cheap nor in such quantities as the other sorts. I think there are many places in the Forest of Dean where ironstone may be Procured but would it not be more advantageous to use those materials which we have within our reach provided a quantity of iron can be made from them?

I presume the ores I forwarded are all calcareous....

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Thomas Halford and David Mushet appear to have met one another at Coleford circa April 10th. 1808. During their visit they probably resided at Poolway Farm which Halford rented from George Dew. Mushet was absent from Alfreton for at least a fortnight, possibly longer, and returned there via London where he parted company with Halford. The meeting was clearly a great success as illustrated by the tone of subsequent letters. Mushet at once became Halford's business confidant and consultant. From the outset Halford and Mushet envisaged a partnership at Whitecliff for Mushet.

3. Introductory Notes on the Partners and other Personalities

Thomas Halford. A letter of 1808 carries the address of 12 Finch lane, Cornhill, London. Pigot's London and Provincial Directory identifies his occupation as that of stockbroker. Wilson Lowry described him as "a very worthy man of fortune but not science". Halford's letters indicate that he was on friendly terms with one "Ricardo", most probably David Ricardo, the eminent economist who had made a fortune on the Stock Exchange. Halford himself would appear to have been a rich man but by 1813 he was experiencing troublesome shortages of money. A document of 1863 (9) records that Halford became bankrupt in February of 1816. Extensive archival searches, kindly undertaken in London, by H.W. Paar have so far been unable to locate any further details of the bankruptcy.

For the present time we must be content with the portrait of Thomas Halford given by his letters. His financial interest at Whitecliff had begun at least as early as 1805, and by 1808 he seems to have owned $\frac{1}{2}$ of the works.

James Teague. He was a resident of Coleford, a forester and free miner, and in 1808 probably lived at Whitecliff Farm which he rented from Sam Symonds.* This lay just up the valley from the ironworks and was demolished this century. By 1801 he was the owner of a large coal works which included his Engine Pit near Mile End, and was a partner in coal works with Bishton and Phillips of Shropshire, "Mr Teague's Railway" and almost certainly at Whitecliff Ironworks. The letters have shown that "Mr Teague's Railway" was completed, and still operating in 1808. (10)

At the office of the Deputy Gaveler in Coleford, there survive a few of the gale application books covering the period 1808-1812. James Teague features in their pages usually in association with Peter, Moses and Isaiah Teague. (11) It is uncertain whether this Moses is the same Moses Teague who re-started the Cinderford Ironworks in 1825-6. Peter Teague was certainly a brother of James Teague and was a prominent coal owner for many years. He was also an active member of the Coleford Baptist Church. One of James Teague's brothers was working at the Neath Abbey Works in 1808 (12) but is not identified by name.

* Variable spellings include Simmons and Symmonds

The Teagues continued to be major coal owners long after the demise of the Whitecliff Ironworks. The family is worthy of much more research.

Rev. Isaiah Birt. "He was born on 6th. September 1758 at Coleford, in Gloucestershire where his forefathers had dwelt for many generations as free miners of the Forest of Dean. His father, though residing at Coleford was pastor of the Baptist church at Kings Stanley in the same county". (13) Isaiah's father was thus the Rev. William Birt who died in 1765. Isaiah's mother, after his father's death, was zealous and active in promoting the preaching of the gospel in the town and neighbourhood. The eventual establishment of a Baptist church in Coleford seems to have stemmed from her efforts together with those of the Rev. Miles Edwards, a minister of Wern near Pontypool. (14)

A hand written minute records that in 1780 Isaiah Birt was admitted to the Baptist College, Bristol, and that he belonged to the Baptist church of Usk. (15) His presence at Usk and his mother's connection with the Baptists of that area makes it likely that they would well know persons associated with the Capel Hanbury Ironworks near Pontypool. Was, perhaps, the young Isaiah employed at those works before studying for the ministry? More knowledge of his mother's family history would probably provide the link. On completion of his studies at Bristol, Isaiah became minister of Plymouth Dock in 1784. He held this ministry until 1814 when he removed to Birmingham.

By 1805 Isaiah Birt owned 3/8 of the Whitecliff Ironworks but this share was probably acquired before 1802. In 1806 Isaiah Birt was granted a patent for 'Black paint composed chiefly of earthy and mineral substances' (16) and before 1808 he owned an interest in a paintworks at or near Whitecliff. These paints were probably manufactured from iron minerals. The scale of operations is not known but his quarter share of the works and patent were nominally valued at £6,000 in 1808.

Isaiah Birt had three sons, John, William and Caleb and at least one daughter, Esther. She married Thomas Nicholson, see infra. Two of the sons, John and Caleb became Baptist ministers. Isaiah Birt died in 1837 and the funeral was conducted by his son John, see infra.

The Rev. C.S. Hall of Bristol Baptist College has drawn attention to other contemporary prominent Baptists and Baptist pigment manufacturers and to possible connections between them and the Birts. One was William Pendered who left Bristol Baptist College for Newcastle upon Tyne in 1783 where he ministered to Baptists including Richard Fishwick and Archer Ward of the Elwick White Lead Works. They were strong helpers in Pendered's church whilst Pendered was also responsible for the arrival of Joseph Kinghorn at Bristol Baptist College about 1784. Archer Ward died in 1800 at his house by the Greenhill, Derby, White Lead Works, and had helped the Baptist cause there. In 1816 one of Isaiah Birt's sons, Caleb, took up his first pastorate at Derby. (17)

John Birt. He was the eldest son of Isaiah Birt and was born in Plymouth in 1787. Mr Tom Bright has recorded "... for some unknown reason he spent part of his boyhood at Coleford, where he became at age 17 a member of the church of which the Rev. W. Bradley was pastor. From the age of twenty until he went to London in 1810 to study for the ministry he assisted his pastor in evangelical work in Coleford and the surrounding district". (18) John Birt was baptized in 1804 at Coleford when he was aged 17 years. He studied under Mr. Dore of Maze Pond, London and became pastor of Hull in 1811. (19) From the letters we learn of another purpose for his presence at Coleford.

Rev. William Bradley. J. Stratford has recorded: "William Bradley was a remarkable man. Local tradition says that he had something to do with the silk mill, and it is certain that a silk mill used to stand hard by the chapel. (20) I remember when a boy meeting a good man of the name of Bradley. He interested me much in relating how he traversed the Forest of Dean on Sabbath days and week evenings carrying the bible under his arm, and a three legged stool in his hand to stand upon while he proclaimed salvation to the benighted colliers, who at that time were most disorderly and ignorant. Often they threw dead cats at him, and pelted him with rotten eggs, filth and stones; but he won many to the truth."

"With few advantages he had a superior mind, great tact and intelligence. Long before the Thames Tunnel or railways were thought of he devised a plan for constructing a tunnel under the Severn, to facilitate communication... I have heard it spoken of as a scheme he would successfully have carried out could money have been found." (21) Tom Bright records that Bradley removed to Hackney in 1810 (18), but another source states that Bradley was living at Hackney from 1808 to 1810. (22) From the letters it will be discerned that a man named Bradley was very much concerned with coal works around Coleford and tramroad promotion, and that he resided beyond Dean Forest in 1809. A plan of a proposed tramroad was deposited by one W. Bradley in 1810. (23) Some of the gale application books for 1808 to 1812 contain references to holdings of a W. Bradley in the Coleford and Lydbrooke districts. (24) In later years a W. Bradley was producing estate surveys in and around Coleford. Just how many of these W. Bradleys were one and the same person must be conjectured but it seems possible that the Bradleys of Stratford's and Bright's accounts are the same man featured in the letters.

Thomas Nicholson. He is featured in later letters. His wife Esther was a daughter of the Rev. Isaiah Birt. He and Mrs Nicholson removed from Plymouth to Coleford in 1802. Stratford records that they commenced a grocery and drapery business in the town and they lived at Whitecliff, in the house where Mary Howitt, nee Botham, was born. (25) This was a large farmhouse purchased from Jane Quick for £975. It lay to the southwest of the ironworks and was bounded on its southwest border by "a colour mill lately in the occupation of Jas. Powell". (26)

In 1812 Nicholson sold to James Teague a farm and colliery at Backwell, Somerset for £3,000. (27) He may also have been engaged in making malt at Coleford. He became bankrupt in 1813. His son, Thomas Nicholson junior, born at Whitecliff in 1805, formed the Parkend Coal Company in later years. (28)

The arrival of Thomas Nicholson senior at Coleford in 1802 - the same year as the furnace was blown in, coupled with his place of residence, strongly suggests that he may have been dispatched to Coleford in connection with the business interests of his father in law, the Rev. Isaiah Birt.

Other Personalities

Spicer was a monied friend of Halford - introduced into the concern as a source of capital for the new company. There are no further details.

Wickenden was described as a "friend" in 1808 when he was sent to confidentially negotiate with James Teague about a possible sale. He seems to have owned a share in the ironworks and was active in the paint trade. His popularity with Halford and Mushet declined towards 1810.

David Soame Hewson of Bromley by Bow was a friend of both Mushet and Halford. He held no financial stake in the iron or paint works but did acquire an interest in the coal works at Bixslade. A legal dispute over this arose in 1825 between Mushet, Hewson and other parties. (29)

Phillips is mentioned frequently, usually in a context of tramroad affairs. He was probably Thomas Phillips of Monmouth, (30) a solicitor active in tramroad promotion. A letter from Hewson (31) suggests that the Parliamentary Bill for the Severn & Wye line had been "drawn up without any knowledge or judgement whatsoever by Bradley and Phillips". Other references in the letters suggest he was also active in promoting the Monmouth to Coleford tramroad. He is not to be confused with the Shropshire Phillips, associate of Bishton and Botham in 1798-1801.

Stinson seems to have been a Forest man employed as a foreman or manager at Bixslade and other coal works. The 1845 Tithe Map lists property in Coleford, plot No. 846, owned by Thomas Alexander Stinson, possibly a member of the family.

Lord Glenbervie was the Surveyor General. By means of the Act of 1808 he was able to direct that 11,000 acres of the Forest be enclosed for timber to meet naval needs. Coal works and tramroads posed threats to these aims particularly the miners' taking of timber under custom. (32)

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4. Changes of Partners, 1808

TH to DM

London. May 18th. 1808

Dear Sir,

Since you left London things have been going on very indifferently at Coleford so much so that I think Mr. Teague may be inclined to rent or sell his $\frac{1}{2}$ share of the works as far as relates to iron making. I may probably be there in the course of a fortnight and I should like to know your views upon any purchase I may be able to negotiate with him. As we are going on at present I am convinced we shall never do any good. Were you to join us I should feel sanguine.

I wish you to weigh the side of the matter and give me your opinion how I shall proceed, whether to offer an annuity of Lordship for the coal and ore. They talk of heightening the furnace and narrowing the top but all that they may do I fear will be good for nothing. Have you come up with the last specimens of ore you brought from Coleford?

I remain yours truly

Tho. Halford.

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DM to TH

Alfreton Ironworks. 21st May 1808

(Draft of letter)

Dear Halford,

I was duly favoured with your letter of the 18th. I looked in vain for some particulars as to the ironstone which I conceive still to be of the greatest importance to the ultimate welfare of the works - tho' from the backwardness that Mr. Teague exhibited on the subject I did not expect much fairness or perseverance in the matter.

I think on the subject of buying his share or indeed the share of any one,

the only risk is appearing anxious to purchase. If the furnace goes on as it has been doing for a few months longer and which seems very likely to be the case, shares so far as they relate to the manufacture of iron will be had cheap enough... (details of Lordship tonnage rentals follow).

... It is however safest to receive Mr. Teague's offer first which when communicated to me might be of advantage before you strike any bargain. Be not in a hurry. If not this year I am confident that next year you may almost be sole proprietor of the undertaking upon your own terms, and without any more responsibility than you have at present. Do not become bound to pay one shilling unless you and those connected with the works find the interest to carry on the works. They always being the sole judges of this.

I would have you consider the offer that Mr. B. made of his paint concern. The works could do much better without any interference or any assistance from his sons....

I have assayed the three ores I brought with me from Coleford. The fine black piece from the mine pit I have tortured a great deal. It yields 64 $\frac{3}{4}$ % of iron, 61% steel was obtained in another experiment. The fine grained smooth ore yields 47 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of iron and like the others has a calcareous matrix. The ironstone we picked up in the Forest of Dean, turns out only 10%, but makes a fine glass. It turns out as I said a poor ironstone with a mixture of sand and lime - it is less calcareous than the clinker.

On the subject of my joining the concern at Coleford I can only in the present stage of the business say that if $\frac{1}{2}$ share can be made over to me, the old capital set aside and a certainty of funds to carry the works forward on a profitable scale, everything else might be made agreeable - tho at this time it is impossible to enter into speculation.

D.M.

TH to DM

London June 4th. 1808

Dear Mushet,

I should have answered your last favour of the 21st. much sooner had I anything to communicate.

Teague is now in London and quite sick of his own management, in fact he has ordered the furnace to be blown out next week. Birt wishes his son to have the burdening for a month and spoke to me about it. I said I had no objection and he has written to his son my reply. The boy is not pleased about the cold manner of my assent, that I had no objection and if he took the management upon him it must be in another way. I suppose he is expecting me to intreat and supplicate his superintendence that the furnace may be blown and to sell before it is out.

I never again intended he should take the burdening upon him but it was wholly out of compliment to his father - who certainly does not desire any compliment paid to him. Teague is so much against Birt's management that if he is to have it, he is determined to rent his share out and partly agreed with Birt, thinking it was my wish his son should manage again. But when I told him my intention of just for a month he changed his determination. Teague would willingly make any sacrifice to get a proper man in. He told Birt so, who is extremely against any one's management but his son's and the only way to get Birt out will be to deprive his son of all employ.

Teague's brother from the Neath Abbey Works has been at Coleford lately and recommended him a person of the name of Sanders. He met him at Mr. Outram's Works in Derbyshire - I apprehend not far from you. I believe they are the Butterly works. He speaks very highly of him for having put (the works to rights) after every one else had failed. He came (from near?) Coleford and wishes to be employed nearer his (birthplace?). I should be obliged by your making some enquiries abt. him.....

If I could get you 3/16th share at moderate terms would it be worth burden-master. Teague is as anxious to have your assistance as I am and would make a sacrifice for it.

What is your opinion about blowing out the furnace. Would it be better to let Birt burden until someone can be found or not?

I hardly know how to act. I wish I was near enough to consult you. Do give me all the advice you can and how I should act. Mrs Halford begs her best respects. Believe me to be

yours ever

Tho. Halford.

DM to TH

Alfreton Ironworks. 6th June 1808

draft letter

Dear Halford,

Your letter of the 4th came duly to hand. I really wish I could advise you to good effect in your Coleford concerns.

The blowing out of a furnace depends upon a calculation whether the loss sustained by carrying on for a given time would commonly exceed the loss of disposing the men and collecting them again... I would prefer sustaining a little loss in keeping the men and general establishment in motion tho' if compelled to blow out the furnace I would never think to make a new hearth till matters were put on a more respectable footing. It is impossible, even in the compass of a long letter, to say what occurs on both sides. With your intentions of going forward in the business it is certainly your best interest to let the whole thing stop.

The man of whom you write is a kind of gentleman keeper. He is a servant of the Butterly Co. and I think receives 2 Guineas weekly as an overlooker of two furnaces. With your materials I would prefer the man with the long hair. Sanders has no knowledge of engines....

I am determined never to have any concern with you if Birts continue their connexion in the concern... I hope that what I am to say will not be deemed to proceed from any improper motive. You should endeavour to get a monied man to buy Birt's share. Because I reckon that a further advance of £10,000 will be necessary to give the whole works a fair chance of success. ...But I would advise you as a friend, not to add alone to your present responsibility. You have ventured sufficiently far in a concern that has completely failed after many years trial...

You mention nothing of the ironstone. You must certainly have asked Teague many questions concerning it. I think you was once aware of its importance tho' if not already tried it may be as well to let it remain in the dark till the present effervescences subside.

You take no notice of what I said in my last respecting the Paint Business. I say that if Birt would exchange his share for the paint trade would you not act prudently in making the exchange. Sell one of his 1/8ths or 3/16ths to a monied partner and make up my share to a quarter at once. This would bring in money to the old partners, particularly if the new one had no objection to accomodate the concern to the extent of £10,000 on interest... I have made some excellent bar iron from the brown ore - I am still of the opinion that this ore treated in a particular way will give some new and important results.

DM to TH

(Alfreton Ironworks). June 1808

.... The other arrangement as to numbers and shares is entirely agreeable and if it can be carried into effect so as to put me exactly in the same situation as any of the others concerned and my share valued over to me at what I conceive it is worth I see nothing to prevent the business being brought to a conclusion.

In stating to you that £10,000 would still be required I mean the finishing and blowing of three blast furnaces certainly - including a stock of materials, repair of the present engine. I take it for granted that no further outlay will be necessary on the part of coal, ironstone and ore...

TH to DM

London, June 25th. 1808

Dear Mushet,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your favour of the 6th Inst and many thanks to you for it.

Since my last I have had a great deal of conversation with Birt and brought him round. He is now very willing for anyone of experience to superintend and says he has never had but one object in view, the general welfare of the concern. While things are going well he is one of the pleasantest men anywhere and to be sure since he has been connected at Coleford he has had much to crop him. He is no particular favourite of mine but I think I might have had worse partners. With regard to selling his $\frac{1}{4}$ share without the paint I don't think he is in the same mind, as the demand from government is much less than he expected...

I have a person of large fortune in view who would buy two parties out who hold 1/8th each. Then there would be four partners equally interested and as much money to be had as would be wanted. When you state that £10,000 will be wanted to give the works a fair chance of success I presume you intend blowing 3 furnaces. I spoke to Teague about the ironstone he told me he had tried without success. I wrote to J. Birt about it. He informed me that no attempts had been made to get it.

I forwarded to you yesterday by waggon a box of brush ore and shall expect you to keep your promise in sending me a couple of razors...

TH to DM

London. July 2nd. 1808

Dear Mushett, (sic)

Your favour of the 28th I have duly recd...

Since my last I have recd. a letter from him (Birt) in answer to me. I wrote requesting his advance of more capital. He says it is not in his power to advance any more and as he cannot be upon that respectable footing in the concern as he would wish, he is desirous of selling his share if I can find him a purchaser

to give him a fair price as things are. His expression is that he will sell his share in the works only therefore I apprehend he intends keeping the paint. I wrote to you in my last that I thought Teague would be disposed to rent his share and he told me in London that he would rent one 1/8th to you and I think he might be induced to part with the other for 21 or 31 years. Before the expiration of that time, I should think we might purchase to advantage.

I wish to have your opinion of the value of Birt's $\frac{1}{4}$ share without the paint and likewise that we might venture to bid Teague for his $\frac{1}{4}$. As Teague has a great opinion of the paint business should he rent it would be the iron concern only. I think for the present the paint will pay more than the iron and I would willingly give him my $\frac{1}{4}$ of the patent for his $\frac{1}{4}$ of the iron. I recd. a letter yesterday from Birt. In it he says that no attempt whatever has been made to get ironstone by open work, that there are many veins of it in the Forest of any and every description and that when the general rail road is made it can be procured very reasonable. Mrs Halford and family are going up to the north and if I can spare time I may possibly accompany them as far as Derby when I shall do myself the pleasure of stopping a day at Alfreton. I beg my respects to Mrs Mushett. I remain yours truly

Tho. Halford.

DM to TH

Alfreton Ironworks. July 5th 1808

Dear Halford,

Your letter of the 2nd. came duly to hand. To recurr to an old saying the value of a thing is just what it will bring. Do you think that Birt really wishes to part with his share or do you think this is a ruse de guerre in his thus suddenly wishing to part with his share after the frequent conversations you have lately had with him. At present the thing is worse than nothing and in these cases a person is glad to get out by making a sacrifice.

If Birt wishes to get out of the iron and coal and ore concern and remain in the paint, the latter being money making, the former at present a losing concern, were the amount he has paid for his share divided of £12,000 then say paint trade £6,000, iron trade £6,000 and so in proportion then what sacrifice should be expected of that half belonging to the iron. Or an offer might be made for the whole share including the paint with liberty for him to offer for his interest in the paint - £8,000 for the whole and sell back the paint.

In giving my opinion in the business I am much afraid that my ideas not being quite so sanguine as to the facility of fortune getting as those of Mr. Teague, I may be laughed at for putting so low a value on the stock in trade at Coleford...

Do not for one moment sustain an argument advanced by anyone upon the advantages of the place - everthing can easily be set aside by referring to the experiences of six years and the present state of manufacture...

It is with extreme pain that Mr. M cannot at this time say she would be glad that Mrs. H. and your party should make our house a stage on her journey North. Be so good as to write me what time you expect being here that I may not be away from home.

TH to DM

London September 14th 1808

... Since leaving Alfreton I have had one letter from Birt, but not at all to the point. He don't seem to relish the idea of selling part of his property at Coleford as by doing that he would still continue in partnership with Teague, and before he asks me a price for his share in the iron works he wishes to consult with his son, who bye the bye, I know would advise his father to wait till the iron rose...

If anything fresh has occurred to you let me know and if you think I could do any good by going to Coleford and striking a bargain with Teague. As the season is fast advancing I am anxious to conclude something before it is too late for building...

.....

5. "The Perplexity of Business": October 1808 to September 1809

TH to DM

Boothby House, Carlisle. Oct. 2nd 1808

...just to say that I recd. a letter from Birt on Friday saying he has made up his mind to sell his share in the iron works if I was disposed to give him a fair price...

He hinted that he was tired with the perplexity of business and wished to devote the remainder of his days to his ministry. I imagine the decision begins to upbraid with his great anxiety after worldly affairs... I replied to him that he was best able to fix the value of his own property and what it had cost him...

I have my doubts as to whether he will sell at £8,000 which I would give though I know you think it far too much...

TH to DM

London Oct. 21st 1808

I returned from the north last week. Since then I have recd. letters from Birt and Teague both of them very anxious to sell out. Teague has altered his tone very much in that he would not sell out before for £12,000. Now he asks £8,000...

Birt's son is in town. He asked me if I would give his father £10,000 for his share, paint included. I told him I would not for Teague had offered his considerably lower, I think if I can get it at about £6,500 I shall do it. Do you think that if £10,000 was advanced to get the works going again Spicer would be able to make good interest for his money by giving £16,000 for his quarter of the works? He will give me that sum for the share but I would wish to say that in two years he would make 10% of his money.

I suspect that should the General Rail Road take place we are extremely well situated for selling a large quantity of coal. These things should, I think, be taken into consideration when he buys. I expect Birt's ultimatum next week...

DM to TH

Alfreton Ironworks 25th. Oct. 1808

... On the subject of shares I am glad that the holders of stock are coming to my way of thinking. As to Teague there are many reasons for buying him out altogether provided that the knowledge he possesses of all local circumstances could be conveyed to the new company...

Now as to Spicer, let me be understood to say that I would not on any account hold out hopes that afterwards cannot be realized thereby inducing anyone to purchase into the concern. You know that after an experiment of six years the work has completely failed and in many respects the ground must be gone over again. But this I can safely say, that depending upon the extent and quality of coal and mine, the readiness of sale and other particulars which I can only know from you, the prospect of getting ironstone etc, I should and do expect that at the end of three years, a higher sale of interest than 10% upon £16,000 for $\frac{1}{4}$ may be divided. But it is still possible that I may be deceived; tho at the same time I assure you that unless I saw a prospect... on such a purpose I should have nothing at all to do with the thing.

TH to DM

London. Nov. 8th. 1809

Birt has offered me his share exclusive of paint for £6.700 to stand in his shoes and pay his arrears for which I have accepted and Teague has offered me his upon nearly the same terms. I have directed a friend (Wickenden) to close with Teague - also he has a strong suspicion that you are entering in and the only thing that compels him to sell out altogether is the taking up of our notes of which there may be out £1000. I believe if they were all in no terms would induce him to part with more than $\frac{1}{8}$ th. It will remain for future consideration whether his local knowledge deserves his having $\frac{1}{8}$ th back presently...

TH to DM at Coleford

London, Feb. 21st 1809

... £1000 will be quite enough to trust the bankers with. You may draw on me now or defer for another month. There is no occasion to pay instantly for money before it is wanted... Monmouth is certainly a more convenient place to bank than Ross and I should think the people equally good...

TH to DM

London. March 16th 1809

... I cannot find the deeds of the land upon which the furnaces stand. I much fear they are lost. No one knows anything of them. Birt is very impatient having borrowed £5,000 from his bankers and talks if he can't be paid soon he shall keep his share. However I have a strong hold upon him and should he attempt that I would compel him to take the $\frac{1}{8}$ th I bought of him in 1805 for £6,000 with interest - for as the delay arises in a deficiency of the deeds I could easily compel him which would silence him at once for I am certain he is much distressed for money...

David Hewson to DM

Bromley in Bow. 4th April 1809

... I am fearful that you will find the Coleford workmen shockingly bad. Ignorance and obstinacy generally go together and the Coleford people take great care that this truth shall be verified in them. I think however that in 7 years you will dispel the cloud and make the Forest of Dean a very opposite place to what you now find it.

Accept my best thanks for your kind remembrance of me, the knife cuts well and formed the pen which writes this letter... (Mushet had forged a number of knives and razors from smelted Dean iron ore and presented them to Halford for general distribution. Halford noted at the time: "I recd. the knives and razors. I have given them almost all away. I have myself the razors and I can only say that they are as good as any I have. I gave one to Williams who is highly pleased with it. Ricardo has a knife...")

TH to DM

London. June 1st 1809

...I am sadly plagued with the lawers. I cannot get them to finish the deeds. I will if possible before I visit Coleford. I will meet you about the 13th. Mr Spicer had better not go to Coleford 'til everthing is signed and sealed He will agree to everthing we may think best be done therefore he will not be much missed. It pleased me to find the haulers are all discharged. They were a necessary expense to the old concern...

Should the Box Bush Pit be got into this summer it would be a fine thing for us. I think with three furnaces we should save £1000 per annum.... I paid for the horses today, £50 to Griffiths. The reason the other bill was returned was I was out of town...

TH to DM

London. June 7th 1809

... I spoke to Tovey about the brick making. We shall proceed again upon his return - he told me Glenbervie had no objection to it. He supposed Mr Davis had stopped them and I rather think we are on what is called Perch Inclosure (an enclosure of young timber belonging to the crown)...

The rope has been sent upwards of six weeks and must be lying at Bristol. It went by inland navigation. I wish when you are at Bristol you could get introduced to Mr. Simmons, Teague's landlord to obtain leave of him for a few more yards of the orchard for the new furnace. The more our works are extended the greater will be the advantage to him.

Andrew Faulds to DM

Worsboro' Dale Colliery, 28th May 1809

Dear sir,

On my return last night from Doncaster I received your letter of the 23rd. Inst. Jn. Walkingshaw, (33) the person you have been enquiring of, has been bred a millwright, to remarkable industry and perseverance. He is about 22 or 23 years of age. He admits no conteplible (sic) share of originality of genius and in all the dealings I had with him at Wilsontown I never had the least cause to complain of his inattention or disobedience. As far as I know, he has never erected a steam engine by himself but he has been constantly in the habit of fitting together separate parts of engines and also in making very considerable alterations on those already erected by which means he has aquired a very accurate knowledge of the practical part of engine making. He also has an extensive knowledge of the theory of mechanics in general. He draws well and has an elegant hand. Such is Mr. Walkinshaw as a servant and from the abilities he possesses I have formed a very sanguine opinion of his success in a superior capacity.

I think I can procure you a smith of the kind you want if you will have the goodness to say what wages you will allow him... J.W. had 16/- or 18/- per week at Wilsontown....

Andrew Faulds to DM

Worsboro' Dale Colliery. 1st June 1809

Dear Sir,

I have this day received your letter of the 30th Ult. I think the most effectual method of avoiding the difficulties you suggest would be to write to Jn. Walkinshaw under cover to my brother Jas. at Shotts Ironworks, near Whiteburn, who can deliver it personally to Walkinshaw without the slightest risk of discovery till everthing is ripe for his departure from Wilsontown. If you and he should agree as to terms, I am convinced you will find him a very useful and intelligent servant...

I should be very happy (if your arrangements at Coleford would admit of a situation for me) to enter again into the iron trade. I have no particular cause for wishing to leave this place. My only motive for mentioning the circumstance to you is that it may perhaps be of advantage to you as well as myself. The information I have been acquiring these last seven years (probably geology) and which at present is of no use to me whatever is more congenial to my inclinations than the one I am at present engaged in. The exertions or knowledge necessary for managing this concern are so trifling that it is little better than living in total inactivity...

TH to DM

London. June 30th 1809

Yours of the 26th I have recd. I was in hopes to have forwarded to you the permission to work up the clay but no answer from the Lords of the Treasury yet. I hope you have by this found your trunk. I would have it advertized - it may bring it to light. The papers can be of no use to anyone...

Would it not be better to get a couple of carpenters down to Coleford to make the gins? You will wait long enough before you sink the Box Bush Pit if you are to depend upon the Coleford people. I think I could procure a couple of clever men who understand everything relating to mill work. It cannot be helped if they cost me money. The urgency of the case demands it.

Draw when you want it but give me a few days notice that I may not be from home. Should any gunpowder be wanted it may be had here at best manufacturers credit of 25% discount. Wickenden talks of giving £7 per ton for purple brown delivered at Bristol. Do you approve of that price? ... Wickenden talks of selling out but had I the money I should not be afraid of taking his share. However I shall look out for someone of great respectability for it. Give me your sentiments...

Most of the difficulties respecting the deeds are removed. We shall get through all soon. It will be a joyful week when 35 tons of iron are made and some recompense for all our anxieties and labour...

TH to DM

London. July 11th 1809

Your last two letters I have recd. I think with a little management we shall be able to procure what materials may be wanted from the Forest when Glenbervie is next time in Gloucester. I recd. a letter from his office yesterday allowing us to use up the clay already prepared but on no account to dig any more. I have therefore written to Mr. Trail desiring him to put the brick makers to work as soon as possible. Davies interference about the land is wholly contemptible - if you wish I will call at Glenbervie's office about it, or will it be better to wait until we see him in the Forest? I trust the delays in brick-making will not prevent your building the third furnace this summer.

The bill for £1,000 is come to hand and will be paid tomorrow. I rather think the rails you mention as not paid for, are not used, if so they should be put thro' the new company account, however they must be paid for. The rest can be settled when we meet.

The Times shall be sent down as soon as possible. I have no wish to sell Duns, only I have stated my mind that Birt should be supplied. If the grinding of them interferes with our other business stop it by all means.

Spicer and his son will be at Coleford at our next meeting. I wish Bradley may succeed in getting us made (free) miners. Mrs. Halford and children leave this for Brighton on Thursday next and the races are taking place about the 22nd. I rather wished to be there but it shall never be said I sacrifice business for pleasure. Therefore if the 24th Inst. suits you I shall as I said before meet you at that time...

David Hewson to DM

Bromley. 24th July 1809

... I am glad Halford will meet you this trip and I hope you will find the Foresters a little more civil and less inclined to be rogueish than you have found them on some former occasions. I do beg, my dear friend, you will use your placid behaviour and persuasive arguments to check all the present information. Settle the affair, if you should have one, as you did with Nicholson; your coolness then I frequently think of, if it had been my case I should have given him what is vulgarly called a damned jawing...

I most highly approve of your intentions (illeg.)... for altho' the natives may be somewhat displeas'd by the introduction of foreigners, yet everone in and about Coleford will be so considerably benefitted by the success of the works that after a short time every jealousy will subside. At the present I am quite of the opinion that there is no man in the neighbourhood of the Forest it would be discreet to entrust with any responsible situation. I have told Halford my mind frequently upon the subject but his very unsuspecting and honourable disposition really unfits him to deal with men who have so great an affection for their own interest. I shall be happy when he has arranged with Teague and Birt.

Give my respects to Trail who I hope has not had occasion for the use of his pistols. I hope the men are a little more civil to him.

With great esteem believe me dear Mushet, truly Yours

David Hewson.

ps. Pray let me know whether I am to purchase the whole of Jamaison's works or only those on mineralogy?

TH to DM

London. August 17th 1809

I have been absent from London ever since I left you at Gloucester. I returned from Brighton yesterday and found yours of the 12th Inst.... Spicer is much pleased with his new concern and wishes to be remembered to you. I presume you will be at Coleford in the course of three weeks. Should Mrs. H. be safe in bed I should like to give you a meeting. What you make up your mind to do with respect to Bixslade only put into execution that no more coal may be taken from us...

TH to DM

London. September 7th 1809

... Wickenden is in Town. He has applied to me to find a purchaser in the present state of the works. Would it be adviseable provided he would take less than S is putting in? Speculate upon it...

TH to DM

London. September 14th 1809

I hope this will find you safe arrived at Coleford and all things going on well. The ugly piece of paper you noticed in your last but one was paid yesterday. I suppose Court's conveyance will be nearly ready. Let me know a few days previous to your drawing upon me. Should not Spicer's name be put into the deeds? Don't finally settle 'til you hear further from me. How is Tovey's (D.G.) health? Nothing can be done towards making us (free) miners 'til he can attend a (free miners') court. As soon as that is ascertained I will set Bradley off again.

No blacksmith this time. Mrs H. is safe in bed with a girl on Tuesday last. If you can spare me a few moments to let me know how all is going I shall be obliged. Wickenden seems cool again abt. selling 'til the furnaces are in blast, however I shall make him pay me up. Have you the cost of Ricardo's furnace abt. you? let me know in your next. I am more fearful about your getting the ore in time than anything else...

TH to DM

London. September 21st 1809

I recd. your favour of the 15th Inst and am happy to hear that Mrs M. accompanied you, the evenings growing long you would find Coleford dull without part of your family...

I have had much trouble with the lawyers but I hope now to get through. There will be some time consumed in getting all the parties who have ever been interested to sign, but the thing is now in a fairer way of being brought to issue than ever and likely to be made secure to all parties. I never had the least doubt in my own mind about the safety of the thing but lawyers like to give as much trouble and to keep their clients as long in suspense as they can. I suppose it is part of their profession.

I hope the Box Bush Pit will be sunk soon enough to enable you to blow in before the new year. Have you begun coking yet and has Hewson sent the castings you ordered? I am pleased the ore turns out so good at the old pit but I presume you will not blow in before the Box Bush is sunk.

I hope Mrs M. is quite recovered from her journey and I hope she likes Coleford - nothing very tempting to be sure in the perhaps indifferent fare and no society. I sent the Chronicle of yesterday. There is a paper upon Govt. written by Ricardo... I am happy to say Mrs H. and the babe are doing well...

TH to DM

London. September 23rd 1809

... Nicholson's hay is cheap. He agreed to let us have the option of buying this at 80/- the last time we were at Coleford. I would take the other 10 tons at the same price.

TH to DM

London. September 26th 1809

... I wish this may find you and Mrs M safe at home. I trust fine weather is come at last, I hope not to late to complete at least two furnaces with their bank. It would have afforded me pleasure to have heard of your intention of blowing by the new year but if it can't be done patience is the only remedy for me...

By a paragraph in your letter you hope in a short time to have pits sufficient to last seven years. I therefore presume no blowing six furnaces 'til that time at least...

6. David Mushet's Decision to leave Alfreton, 1809 to 1810

David Mushet to Thomas Halford

Alfreton Ironworks

draft letter

21st October 1809

Dear Halford

I begin to feel uneasy at your long silence. I trust nothing new from the lawyers has occurred to plague you.

For seeing for sometime the necessity that a much greater portion of my presence will be necessary at Coleford than I have hitherto been able to spare I have of late endeavoured to arrange matters for that purpose with my friends here, but without effect. This has led to considerable discussion and, which like all discussions wherein the interests are opposite, has terminated unpleasantly as I will not accede to the proposition of abandoning the Coleford concern in preference to the present one in which I am now engaged. I have therefore determined upon bringing matters to a conclusion here and if perfectly agreeable to you and Mr Spicer take upon me as soon as possible the superintendence of the Coleford concern.

You very well know that I am not rich enough to dedicate my time exclusively to any object without compensation.....
(all deleted)

The more particular discuss... (all deleted)

In thus deciding I make... (all deleted)

We shall discuss this subject more particularly when we meet at Coleford.

The weather has of late made us ample amends for the former leaky season - the buildings have advanced wonderfully since I left Coleford. Another month I daresay would enable us to get them all roofed. The engine is getting fast up considering the confused and rusty state it had been in for years.

Bixslade goes on with facility and all the many other departments seem flourishing.

I do not intend meeting you at Gloster on Monday afternoon....and going on to Newnham that night to arrange Court's business. Besides Court's money there will be wanted £200 for the other purchase. One hundred is paid and £150 is to lay over. The expense of the last 6 weeks, owing to the payt. of some accounts when I was in Coleford, the Bixslade and a hundred pounds for Trotter's bill has been heavy and has cut up the last thousand. I must therefore reluctantly

draw upon you again there not being so much in the bank to make up next weeks pay. I drew upon you on account of something here I believe on 2nd October. Do let me hear from you soon. I wrote Mr Hewson since I last came from Coleford. I hope he will accompany you this trip to Coleford.

David Mushet to Hughes & Hardwick, Monmouth

21st October 1809

Inclosed you have a draft on Mr Halford, London 23rd - 3 days light for £1,000 which place to our credit when paid.

D.M.

TH to DM

London. October 21st 1809

...I trust this fine weather will enable Trail to forward the works and complete the quantity of bricks that may be wanted. As you will want money soon I will thank you to give me notice. ... I hope your furnace continues well and is still making 40 tons per week. (This must be a reference to Alfreton.)

TH to DM

London. Oct. 23rd 1809

... The difficulties with the lawyers are I hope drawing to a close. One essential thing is ascertained - that a good title can be made to all the mines and minerals. The freehold of the land upon which the furnaces stand I have no doubts are equally good but the deeds are lost or missing... this difficulty can be overcome... it should not prevent us completing our purchases.

The water course through Holder's land (34) is upon lease for 21 years, 11 of which are unexpired. Before that period expires some fresh lease may be obtained. These two are the only obstacles I am aware of.

I am much pleased at the idea of your residing at Coleford though I fear it will not be so advantageous to you, could you have kept both concerns for the present at least. Spicer is out of town and previous to my consulting him abt. your being at Coleford I wish to know confidentially from you what consideration would be agreeable to you for devoting the whole of your time to Coleford.

It is my wish that everything handsome should be done towards you and I shall be everything in my power to promote it - but S. is a tight fisted chap. Let me hear from you by return...

TH to DM

London. October 24th 1809

Since I wrote to you yesterday I have seen Spicer. I said little about you waiting to know your wishes. Our conversation was respecting the title. He seems to have some doubts about it but wished to know your opinion respecting it and whether you thought under all circumstances it would be most advisable to accept.

The Forest property is perfectly secure and as I stated to you yesterday, the deeds to the land upon which the furnaces are standing are missing, but we have living testimony that strict possession has been had for 60 years. For my own part I have no anxiety about it and so I told Spicer and if he was not perfectly satisfied I would have him by all means give it up. I can get others equally good who would be happy to have a share... Now if you are of the same mind write me your opinion, which I know will have great weight with him. I am very indifferent whether he completes his purchase but yet I think it right to give him every satisfaction I can. I will thank you to answer this immediately...

I am highly pleased with the idea of your residing at Coleford and so is Ricardo who I informed...

TH to DM

London. October 29th 1809

Court's land must be conveyed to you and myself only. I shall pay £1000 into our bankers for that purpose independant of the account you drew on the 23rd. I hope you will find everything going on to your liking at Coleford. Excuse me, but should not the resevoir be completed before the winter sets in that a supply of water be obtained for the summer? ...

All the trouble I have had is entirely due to Teague's carelessness. I wish he was in a house of correction for a month for his negligence.. Tell Bradley there will be 50 Guineas for him as soon as he gets us made free miners. If Tovey is recovered I would have you urge him to it.

God bless you and believe me

Yours truly

Tho. Halford.

TH to DM

London. October 31st 1809

... Spicer likes our concern too well to give it up. He accepts the title. If you can get anyone to attest that possession for 60 years has been had James will be able to procure it. My Soltr. informs me that a Mrs Milsom is the one who can attest it. One general deed must be drawn up and signed by all the parties who have been interested in the works and which deed is preparing.

Teague ought to have gone to Mr Bishtons and examined all his papers. A vast deal of trouble would have been saved could the deeds be found but not one of the sellers have staid a simple step or taken the least pains to procure what was wanted. I trust we shall soon be independent of them all... I had not forgot your spectacles and if I dont bring them I shall forward them to Derby... How do they come on with the Box Bush Pit - is the limestone as soft as it was?

TH to DM

London. November 29th 1809

... I will pay £1000 into Grailes on Saturday or you may draw upon me if you have not already done so for that sum. The abst. of the deeds is prepared and will be sent to Birt in a day or two for his approval. I think the writing will be settled before you blow in. I have not purchased the iron safe - I forgot the dimensions - send them in your next. I have this moment paid £2 2/- for newspapers and I beg my kind respects to Mrs M...

TH to DM

London. December 2nd 1809

... I wrote to you on Wed. saying if you had not drawn upon me that I would pay £1000 into Grailes but as I have been disappointed in receiving some money it will be more convenient to me for you to draw as usual. I shall therefore expect your bill sometime next week.

The writings are in a fair way to be soon settled. I have altered the plan, It will be more expensive to me, but will prevent any hesitation on the part of Birt in the executing. It was intended that one deed from all the parties to the

present owners should convey the shares as they are intended to be held but I thought that when Birt saw that Spicer had given so much more than he was to receive he might refuse to sign...

My plan is to have 4/16 conveyed to you and 11/16 to me at the price given for these and your giving so much less than they sold for they can have no objection to execute which in the other case they might. The extra expense to me will be 10 per cent duty on 8450 which I would rather sacrifice than have any difficulties...

TH to DM

December 7th 1809

I duly recd your favour of the 2nd Inst. Its contents were highly gratifying and if we succeed as well at Bixslade we may consider ourselves kings favourites. I trust you will be able to collect a company of colliers for the new pit which I suppose is to be sunk to the coal.

Bradley has been telling Wickenden that Teague has got more than his share of coal belonging to the Gent^m Colliers. I should like to meet you next week at Coleford but I think I can be of more service looking after the lawyers here. Spicer's soltr. was much pleased with the deeds I bot. from Coleford last.

If you want me I will endeavour to be with you as I wish to have Dew's farm opposite the furnaces which would render us tolerably independant. I think the Hopewell Level should be begun as soon as possible unless you are certain of cutting off Bradley when you please for if they get a partner with money it is possible they may get there before us.

I would have you write to Clouts at Bristol abt. purple brown. Wickenden has been doing well with his. He has sold as high as £15 per ton. He has not sent any from the new company yet therefore we can hardly expect any money from him. I will send the iron chest by first Bristol vessel. I wish you a safe journey to Coleford and shall be anxious to hear from you there.

It would be too good a thing for the Coleford furnaces to be making 40 tons per week. Should such an unfortunate event take place it should be very cautiously mentioned to Hewson for fear of his fainting. However I should like to have the pleasure of bringing him round with a pail full of water in his face.

Yours very truly,

Tho Halford.

TH to DM

London. December 14th 1809

I hope this will find you safe landed at Coleford. I wish you has become a fixture there for I don't much like night travelling. I do expect someday that both of us will be overturned and half killed.

I recd. a letter from James this morning stating that the parties who sold us the land at Lane End refuse to sign the deeds unless we pay them the whole of the purchase money. I never heard a more infamous threat...

I am to meet the lawyers on Saturday morning to arrange our affairs and that the deeds may be sent to Birt as soon as possible. These cursed lawyers have made me quite ill and only let me get out of their clutches and I'll take good care to escape them in future...

Hewson is all astonishment at your produce at Alfreton and I begin to think his faith increases... I should much like to be with you but I must defer my visit 'til you blow in...

TH to DM

London. December 19th 1809

... I have to thank you for your favour recd this morning. By it I am as fully informed of what is going on in Coleford as if I had been there, Therefore the expenses of a journey are saved.

I wish I could assist you in the least, I would cheerfully, but perhaps I am more useful in raising the supplies here. Don't make yourself uneasy about money, when you want you shall have it only give me due notice... I write this to show I do not forget you, for I have nothing really to say with its postage. Remember I am always obliged by hearing from you...

ps: Reports of an exchange of prisoners strangely prevail today (Napoleonic War).

TH to DM

London. December 23rd 1809

... You need not have taken so much trouble to send an acct of disbursements at Coleford. I trust another month will finish all the principal jobs and I have rather an idea that a few pigs will be cast before March. The water at Box Bush is very vexing but you'll soon get the better of it...

If my going down will be of any service, you shall see me and Hewson also. In the course of next week I will send my account of the amounts paid up to this. Not including acceptance is about £6,700. I see by your last that £2,000 has been paid which never made part of your calculations therefore I think exclusive of the farm and purchases you will not exceed your original sum. I hope you will be able to settle at Alfreton agreeable to your wishes. I do assure you I long to have you a fixture at Coleford. Spicer and Ricardo desire to be remembered and wishing you many returns of the season...

TH to DM

London. January 10th 1810

... Your bill for £500 came due last Saturday and I expect to see your mark upon the like description of paper again very soon. I think you will want at least £5,000 more before you have done. I am afraid I shall not be able to prevail upon Spicer to advance more than the £5,000 he originally agreed to. Only let us get to make some iron and everything else will appear light and easy. I trust you will succeed to get a quantity of ore at the Box Bush or no two furnaces will be blown this spring. I presume your only doubts are respecting a supply of ore.

Wickenden talks of selling his share but not so earnestly as I would wish and I think nothing but an immediate want of money would compel him. He thinks he will get a better price if he waits til the furnaces are at work. Now, if we supply him with purple brown it will enable him to keep his family with its proceeds and that is all he cares for. I believe it never gives him a moments uneasiness to whom he owes money and not one sacrifice would he make to support the concern. Therefore for the present I would recommend not sending anymore of the paint to him. Besides he wants a years credit which is surely longer than we ought to give. Better keep the article for a time than part with it without certainty of the money...

Dawson's agent went to Plymouth on Wed. last to meet Birt's soltr, and get the deed executed by Birt... He is then to go to Bishton, Phillips and Botham and afterwards proceed to Coleford for all parties to sign there. This will cost me £50 more but it will save two or three months which at this time is a great object and relieve my mind from much anxiety.

I think Price (Mr Dawson's agent) will be at Coleford abt the same time. Be so good as to give him a bed at our house again. He is a clever little fellow and knows more about the thing than anyone else. Don't let him hinder you in the least, only keep him up to the thing and when he has nothing to do of an evening let him be drawing an abstract of the title for Spicer's soltr...

TH to DM

London. 29th January 1810

... I did think you would be at work abt the middle of next month but from the boiler being in an unfinished state it will be March before you begin. The Box Bush has turned out unfortunate... if you cannot get rid of the water I suppose an engine will effect it... With respect to the dullness of the coal trade I presume you care little about that at present. You will begin with a larger stock of cokes...

The hay is well bought. You have not forgot the other 20 tons bot of him. I don't know what Nicholson is about but I would not let the hay remain any longer on his premises than convenient. I hope he will muster enough to complete his purchase. Have you got a house yet? This is a bad season for moving but I hope you will be amply repaid for all inconvenience. The timber is capitally bt...

TH to DM

London. February 2nd 1810

... I rather think the deeds will be finished this evening... I should not have written to you today but Homfray of Lidney called upon me this morning to know if we were inclined to purchase his works. They will take about £18,000 to carry them on. I told him I would acquaint you abt it...

I think Mr Birt's house is very likely to suit you. I wish you may succeed in getting it. Price will leave here for Coleford next week and Birt is to be at Bristol the week following with Clark to execute.

I wish you and your family a safe and speedy journey from Alfreton and that you may be safely landed in Glos...

TH to DM

London. February 5th 1810

I suppose you are all bustle and confusion - I wish you well through it. The purpose of my troubling you with this is to say I would have you bring Mrs Mushet and family to Coleford. There are bedsteads enough but no feather beds. You will be able to make shift 'til you can hear of a house to your mind. Should I be at Coleford I can easily get a bed at Teague's.

I have been all the morning with Price to get the deeds stamped which I expect to be done tomorrow...

7. Tramroads: 1808 to 1809

Although James Teague and others had built and were still operating "Mr. Teague's Railway" from Mile End to Lydbrook and Roynon Jones and his associates had built their Bullo Pill Tramway towards Cinderford, most of Dean Forest was served only by roads. Many schemes had been prepared for a Severn and Wye tramroad and a bill was finally passed in Parliament in June 1809. The bill for the Monmouth to Coleford tramway was withdrawn in 1809 but subsequently resubmitted and passed. Both of these tramways were vital to the interests of Thomas Halford and David Mushet. Their activities in connection with the bills is shown in the following extracts. David Mushet played a major role in their administration for many years after they were built. (35)

TH to DM

London. Oct 21st 1808

... I suspect that should the General Rail Road take place we are extremely well situated for selling a large quantity of coal...

TH to DM

London. 21st Jan. 1809

I fear I cannot provide you with a copy of the Monmouth Bill therefore Phillips must be seen before it is presented in Parliament which I imagine will not be before the end of next month. I have spoken to Bradley but he knows nothing about the issue...

TH to DM

London. Feb. 18th 1809

... Phillips called upon me yesterday. He talks of making a road for us into the furnace yard. I told him you had no objection provided that the tonnages was usual at 2d per ton... He says we shall have it upon our own terms.

He is to meet with Glenbervie on Monday next finally to arrange the Bill soon after which I am to have a copy to send you. The bill will not be presented for three weeks. We shall not be able to send coals to Bristol free of coast duty - it is given up for fear of opposition from the Staffordshire people. Mr Bathurst tells Phillips that another Bill is to be bt. in and will endeavour to get a clause to that effect introduced for us.

TH to DM

London. February 21st 1809

... I dine with Phillips today and shall strongly impress upon him to pay every attention to your observations. If you think a journey to London would do good the Bill will not be presented for three weeks, that there will be plenty of time to make alteration. If you stop at Coleford till next week most probably you will see Phillips. I am apt to think he has been to hasty in the business...

Follow your own plans and pay no attention to Canglement for he is only fit to live underground... I would have you sound Teague further upon letting the Compy. have 50 acres of land. I was afraid you would find Teague dilatory as I always told you... I am not pleased about his hanging back about his farm and if he won't alter he shall not have 1/16th with us. Poolway level turns out in so ruinous a state it is not possible to repair it that coal may be brought out in quantity... I wish I could in any way appoint you at Coleford for you must have a rare working business amongst them all.

TH to DM

London. March 2nd 1809

... The Monmouth Bill is given up for this session. At present it was only to extend to Redbrook and the Duke of Beaufort wishes it to be continued to Monmouth. Perhaps it is better than presenting it in its undigested state.

Phillips tells me we shall have a gang road from the mine pit. Have you given up sinking the Box Bush Pit? Teague will behave shabbily if he does not let us have some land... You mention his not calling upon you I think the reason for this was that he did not wish to create any suspicion in Birt as he is ignorant of Teague being with us...

TH to DM

London. April 13th 1809

I have just recd. a letter from Phillips particularly requesting us to be at Gloucester by Monday evening next to attend a meeting of subscribers of the Rail Road on the Tuesday. (36)

He states that it is important that we should attend the meeting - if the objectionable clauses in the Bill cannot be altered it would be desirable to get the Bill withdrawn and perhaps our stating that to the subscribers may induce them to insist upon their being abandoned...

Astley Bowdler to David Mushet

Coleford. April 14th 1809

I am sorry I did not know you were to leave Coleford so soon after my return from London or I would have seen you to explain what transpired with Lord Glenbervie respecting the clause limiting the future sinking of pits to 100 yards from the Railway, which I do not think will ever operate against the colliers or miners as Lord Glenbervie has pledged himself on the part of the Crown that an application to the Deputy Surveyor for the time being showing it is necessary, any further length will be granted. The clause was made and insisted on to prevent wilful or improper depra-dation in the Forest which Lord G. has been intemperately told the miners were justified in doing and would by their present existing privileges continue to do.

There is a meeting advertised in the Gloucester papers which is for the purpose of treating with Messrs Pidcock, Homfray and Mr Jones, both of which we can do without. I hope you will attend it on Tuesday 18th inst. at the Bear (Inn), Newnham.

I understand you are going to make a large resevoir on Mr. Dew's land. I shall be glad (if you have not let it) to excavate it for you by estimate as there are some excavators waiting for work on the Railway.

TH to DM

Gloucester. April 21st 1809

I arrived here on Monday and found your letter. I was fearful you would not be able to meet me though I am aware that hardly anything more could be done than what has been. I had Bradley with me. He is as well as most of the rest of the subscribers which we met on Tuesday at Newnham were unanimous with respect to Pidcocks offer. Mr. Tovey had offered them 260 tons of coal per week free of tonnage which they refused, but would gladly have accepted on Tuesday. They then made another offer, which was any quantity of tonnage for the use of their works and unlimited tonnage upon the railroad for 6d per ton which was likewise refused.

It was thought better to abandon the basin and canal and bring a railroad down to the Severn which Rennie who had a few days before, made a survey and reported it to be practical. This last plan might save thousands though the original would be best if any terms could be made with Pidcock.

The meeting broke up after refusing Pidcock's terms and agreed that Tovey, Bowdler, Bradley and myself should wait upon Mr. Bathurst for his approbation to the new plan. We met him yesterday morning and acquainted him with the result of Tuesday. He thought Pds. demands were unreasonable. I told him I had no authority to name any offer, but I should if Pidcocks should agree to have any quantity for the use of their works, not exceeding 3000 tons free of tonnage and to pay for any extra quantity. The same as for High Delph coal which theirs is. I thought the subscribers might be induced to close upon those terms. 3000 tons at 9d per ton will make £112. 10s. Now is this worth the use of their waste water? I am certain the subscribers would have allowed them 5000. Bathurst said they ought to agree and if they did not he could not support them in their opposition which they intend making to the bill.

The next objection was the clause of 100 yards. They did not make any great objection to this that when the enclosures were set out they would be allowed any distance that did not interfere with them. I fear the clause at present cannot be remedied as the Gloster people have agreed to it. Their great wish is for our Bill to be thrown out which will give them the whole of the trade. Strong remonstrances have been made to Ld Glenbervie by Ld Berkeley and others the effect of which I am ignorant. Bradley's sincere opinion is that under all circumstances the Bill should not be accepted. There will be a meeting in London next week before the Bill goes into committee and if you come up we can get an interview with Glenbervie. Rennie thinks that if proper representation were made he could give way...

TH to DM

London. April 25th 1809

I have much pleasure in acquainting you that there is an opposition made to the Rail Road Bill on the part of the miners. Since they have been made acquainted with its contents, they have had several meetings of which I did not know of until this morning by letter from Teague, and are determined to petition Ld Glenbervie particularly upon the 100 yards and should the Bill in its present state be carried they are determined not to get any coal to take upon it. Certainly the Bill has been most scandalously mismanaged....

Lord Berkeley at the remonstrance of Mr. Probyn has been with Glenbervie and spoke very strongly against depriving the miners of their timbers as well as the limited distance of sinking pits. With a little management I think the Bill might be withdrawn for the session and there would be plenty of time to arrange a new one advantageous to all parties...

TH to DM

London. May 13th 1809

Yours of the 10th I recd yesterday. I wrote to you on Thursday to Coleford. It was to say that Ld Glenbervie had given up the point to the miners or nearly to the same effect. It was to allow them to open pits beyond the limited distances in all but the areas coloured green (refers to inclosures, already made or intended, for timber growing. These areas are shown on a plan: GRC Q. RUM 27).

I don't think we have much to fear for some time to come. It will take them two or three years to finish the Rail Road. In the meantime we shall not be inactive in securing our gales in the best possible manner...

TH to DM

London. June 1st 1809

Yours of the 15th and 28th. came safely to hand. I should have answered the former sooner but had nothing to communicate. The Bill, I believe, will pass the Commons today. After various meetings with Bathurst, Pidcock's claims were left to arbitration, the result I am not exactly acquainted with. I understand there will be a meeting of the subscribers at Ross as soon after the bill passes the Lords and you are to be one of the committee.

TH to DM

London. September 7th 1809

I have recd a letter from Phillips and he has at last paid the installment upon our shares. What answer did you give Bowdler respecting the advance of 20 per cent which the committee have solicited to be made within a month?

Ld. Glenbervie is expected to be at Newnham abt the 13th Inst to mark out the enclosures, have you anything to suggest upon the business or perhaps you will be at Coleford abt. that time. I would be there but I must remain at home 'til Mrs. H is confined which I rather expect will be abt that time...

TH to DM

London. September 23rd 1809

... 15 per cent has been paid by me on the Rail Road shares. I understand from Bowdler they want 20 per cent more immediately making 35 per cent to be advanced.

.....

8. Coal Works: 1808 to 1810

The term coal works is a contemporary term which collectively describes gales and working collieries. Gales were areas of coal to which rights to work were granted and owned. This system was basic to the customs and privileges of the Dean free miners. Gales, once granted to free miners, were frequently sold or leased to third parties. (37)

Prior to 1808 the coal works probably associated with the Whitecliff Ironworks were as follows:

1. Poolway Level. This lay just west of Coleford and would have worked the Coleford High Delf seam, and possibly the Trenchard coal, in the area shown as New Hawkins gale on a copy of Sopwith's 1835 plan held by the Deputy Gaveller, Crown Offices, Coleford.
2. Coal supplied by James Teague and Rev. Isaiah Birt from the Hopewell gale. This was a very large gale, entered principally from Wimberry Slade.
3. Coal supplied by Teague and Birt from the Potlid gale near Mile End, Coleford, and also from the Gentlemen Colliers' gale to the south east of Coleford.

Following the acquisitions of Halford and Mushet between 1808 and 1810 the iron-works were able to draw coal from:

1. Poolway Level.
2. Hopewell in Wimberry.

3. Bixslade (probably including Bixslade Upper and Lower Levels, Howlers Slade Deep Engine and Old Furnace Level).
4. Prosper, at Coalway.
5. Gentlemen Colliers' Colliery, at Coalway.

Reference to the post 1835 gale map, plan 2 will give some indication of the size of this holding. In 1808-1810 however, these gales were not defined as the plan shows them. The size of a gale was controlled by a complicated set of rules relating to the area of coal that could be drained by a level (extant or hypothetical) driven from a given point. The letters make frequent mention of "losing coal" and "cutting off" which refer to these practices. It will be seen that the "cutting off" of ones own coal by other parties was to be abhorred but this did not prevent attempts to "cut off" coal belonging to others!

The deliberations of the Dean Forest Mining Commissioners, coupled with Sopwith's delineations of the gales put an effective end to such practices after 1835. The award of gales by the Commissioners in 1841 provides valuable information as to the fate of the gales associated with the Whitecliff Ironworks some 25 years after the letters.

TH to DM

London. 21st Jan. 1809

... I think in the course of two years the works will be cheap at £100,000. You will perhaps think me sanguine. I am not acquainted with such a tract of coal property to be had anywhere and in a few years likely to be productive...

I suspect that if the General Rail Roads are made we are extremely well placed to sell a large quantity of coal...

TH to DM

London. Feb. 18th 1809

I forgot to mention to you that Teague's arrangement at the Hopewell Level. In consideration of the Iron Company's driving it in afresh they are to have half of it. I think it has cost us about £200 and which must be paid back if no consideration is allowed. I wish to settle this with Teague. Mr Birt wishes to sell his $\frac{1}{4}$ of the coal works. What is your opinion of them? He intends offering them to Teague - perhaps he may consult you abt. buying them. I think that now he (Teague) has my payment he should reserve a little for his girls and not invest the whole in coal works. I much wish to know where the deeds are belonging to the furnaces and mill. I believe Birt's journey to Coleford is to ascertain where they are so 'til they are found no conveyance can be made...

Th to DM

London. March 2nd 1809

... What have you done with Teague respecting our sinking our pits for coal? I suppose he is a little sore that his level is set aside as far as relates to coal but never mind that... Does he offer the Gentlemen Colliers Colly for the same price he gave and has Birt sold his share of the coal works?

TH to DM

London. March 16th 1809

... I should think Teague might be prevailed upon to let us have his share in the Gent. Colliers as I have frequently heard him say he never got anything by it...

TH to DM

London. March 17th 1809

... I find Teague has bought five parts of the Gent. Colliers but what shares they are I cannot tell, for the agreement not even notices them. This is just like the Coleford people.

TH to DM

London. May 13th 1809

... With respect to purchasing the Prosper work and others which are near us, what you think best I shall be satisfied to do but have you thought seriously of Bradley's level? I have heard him frequently say they should cut off the above works and should he be correct, our buying them would not avail us.

I trust we have a supply of coal for two furnaces for some time, at least until we can secure more. I think some arrangement may be made with Teague to have the whole of the Hopewell Level, which I should like to have carried in as we might possibly cut off Bradley in part and set him at rest with respect to ourselves. The passing of the Bill (Tramroad Bill) will compel us to lay out more money but this can't be helped. Don't make yourself uneasy about that. I wish to secure as much coal as you can and if you are satisfied about that all will be well...

ps. Bradley is going to Coleford next week. I have promised him 50 Guineas if he can get us made free miners. I think it can be done.

TH to DM

London. June 1st 1809

... I fear we shall not be able immediately to be made (free) miners, but a little industry will accomplish it before the year is out. Two meetings of 48 miners were held a year back respecting some new laws. They only want a third to confirm them and which will be the time for us to be elected...

TH to DM

London. June 30th 1809

... I very much like your plan of proceeding upon Bixslade directly. Get all the coal you can before interference comes into the Forest...

TH to DM

London. August 26th 1809

... Bradley called yesterday. He tells me everything is going on well for our being made free miners. He thinks in about three weeks a meeting will be called to investigate the old laws and make any new ones that might be thought necessary and that we shall be elected.

The privileges of elected miners are greater than freeborn ones in as much as they can gale works living out of the Hundred of St. Briavels which the others cannot. Now Bradley has left the Forest he cannot gale any works whereas should we be elected we can. Teague informed you otherwise for no other purpose than to prevent us taking steps to become free miners. The laws are equally applicable to ore as well as to coal - indeed they must have been made solely for the ore, that being got centuries before the coal. I trust in about three months a good account will be given of the Boxbush Pit (the iron ore pit in Coleford)...

I hope you are looking out for a good servant...

TH to DM

London. September 7th 1809

... The gunpowder I ordered immediately upon my arrival here... Have you any settled plan respecting coal tar? I met Jelf, one of the partners in the other railroad. He told me some people from London had offered to take a large quantity of his coal provided they could dispense of the cokes. If you think it advisable I will make further enquiries about what quantity might be sold here.

I drank success to you on Saturday last and I hope your next blast will be as successful as your last...

TH to DM

London. September 23rd 1809

I recd. yours of the 20th. yesterday and am much pleased by its contents. Time and patience are only required to complete our veins.

As you have bt out Williams and Mathews keeps his share, Teague, of course, will not take the quantity of coal allotted to him. When I was last at Coleford I would not give him a single yard. I am glad you have determined to begin upon Bixslade immediately and if you thought it right I would have you gale the place Tovey refused us last April. James told me we might have what gales we pleased and though there is more coal than we can exhaust in our lives I would not lose an ounce because if we don't use it, in a few years I have no doubt it will sell well.

Would not Derbyshire people proceed with more activity at Bixslade than our Foresters? All my wish is that we may not lose any coal that ought to belong to us therefore I would work day and night to secure it. I only suggest this to you resting perfectly satisfied that what you determine upon will be for the best.

I hope none of the coal in the Hopewell belonging to us will be taken from us. Have you had any talk with Teague abt giving up our claim upon him for coal for his share of the Hopewell? What think you of it and was an arrangement of that kind to take place, could he afterwards cut us off any of the Hopewell with his new Engine Level? I would make no arrangements with him if it were in his power to injure us afterwards...

TH to DM

London. September 26th 1809

... I ordered gunpowder to be sent immediately upon my return from Gloucester but as none has been sent I have ordered three barrels down immediately. The price is £8 per barrel, 25 per cent discount for prompt payment to which I have agreed. Now what do you think of letting Stinson have it at prime cost and retailing it to the men? He will get £2 per barrel. I merely hint at this as an encouragement to him. Of course you'll do as you please in it...

I am pleased Bixslade is begun and I hope will be carried on with spirit. What time do you apprehend will it take before they cut the coal?

TH to DM

London. November 29th 1809

... I hope your next will afford some information respecting Stinson's movements as I feel rather anxious about the boring. I am much pleased with your report of the Trenchard Coal and I trust you will find the High Delf turns out capital coke and capable of carrying a good burden...

TH to DM

London. December 2nd 1809

... I am pleased that you are satisfied with the proceedings at Bixslade - I should much like to hear they had got down upon the ore at the Box Bush Pit but patience is necessary in all mining concerns.

If men could be procured, no time should be lost in driving the Hopewell Level. I trust you will succeed in getting some good colliers from your Country. Let me hear from you when you reach Coleford...

TH to DM

London. December 19th 1809

... I am sorry to find any jealousy aroused on the part of the Foresters but they must be opposed with firmness and a proper example made of the principle aggressors. I have had the Hopewell Level conveyed to us with the other property. I thought it better to be done in a legal way and might prevent disputes hereafter...

TH to DM

London. December 23rd 1809

... What have you done for the Derby men? I would most certainly punish the aggressors as severe as possible. All combinations against foreigners must be resisted with spirit and promptitude. A few of the Foresters sent to jail for a few months may set the matter at rest...

TH to DM

London. January 10th 1810

... Price has conveyed the whole of the Hopewell to us but it had better be altered, or we shall have to convey 1/8th of it back again, unless (if it meets with your approbation) the Iron Compy were to relinquish their claim upon Teague's coal for his half. - while we have so strong a hold over T's coal he can never sell it and should anything happen to him I should think that work will come under the hammer as none of his children seem disposed to follow the trade. Have you made any arrangement yet with your amicable pen?...

TH to DM

London. January 11th 1810

I have just heard from Price. He has settled everthing with Birt to his satisfaction but not exactly to mine. Birt agrees that when the Poolway and Gent^m Colliers are exhausted then the Iron Company are to have the privilege of getting coal. Now as the latter has been purchased by the new company it has no connection whatever with anything I have bot. of the old company. I have therefore told Price that I shall not agree to that arrangement for I have a deed from Teague and Nicholson conveying to me the right to get coal when the Poolway is exhausted and I am not going to resign what is my own... I have no idea of giving up any privilege we have, for they will give us nothing...

.....

Summary from 1808 to 1810

The letters give an indication of the various business interests owned by Thomas Halford in the Forest of Dean in 1808. With those in process of being acquired by him after 1808 the interests can be divided into four categories:

1. The Whitecliff Ironworks.
2. The paint and colour concern.
3. Collieries.
4. Tramroad shares.

The letters give some indication of the complexity of the arrangements and they also record that David Mushet began to acquire in 1808, on his own account, interests in the Whitecliff Ironworks, Bixslade Colliery and tramroad shares.

In 1808 Thomas Halford appears to have owned either $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{7}{16}$ ths of the Ironworks together with its associated collieries and $\frac{1}{4}$ share of the paint patent and manufactory. What he paid in total for these shares is not known but one letter records that he paid Birt in 1805, £6,000 for an $\frac{1}{8}$ th share, most probably in the ironworks. On the basis of this figure Halford can hardly have spent less than £20,000 acquiring shares prior to 1808.

From 1808 to 1810 he spent approximately:

buying out Teague and Birt	£13,000
rebuilding the ironworks and acquiring other property	£10,000

His total Forest investment was thus in the order of between £40,000 and £50,000. How much was to be received from Mushet and Spicer for their shares is unknown but the figure must have been between £5,000 and £15,000. It is very difficult to convey the size of this investment in terms applicable to the present day but an inflation factor of about 50 would seem reasonable. It appears therefore, that Halford invested the equivalent of over one million pounds in the money of today, for the sole purpose of hopefully, increasing his wealth.

The letters have, so far, taken events to the 5th February 1810 when David Mushet was packing his belongings in Alfreton ready to take up residence at Coleford. Initially his home would be Poolway Farm but he would buy a house just as soon as a suitable one came on the market. Later his family was to join him. In London, Thomas Halford was well pleased with his affairs. They had taken two years to effect and he was weary with the ways of lawyers. Nevertheless, his ironworks consisted of two (possibly three) furnaces now virtually complete and ready for blowing in. For this purpose he had procured one of the country's leading metal-lugists, David Mushet, who was to become a partner and personally superintend the works. An enormous tract of coal property had been acquired in the Coleford district and the tramroads (in which he also held generous shares) were being steadily advanced towards them.

Halfords only doubts concerned the iron ore. Would they be self sufficient or not? All these affairs had cost a great deal of money but even so, he toyed with the idea of buying Homfray's works at Lydney for £18,000. He looked forward to the day when six blast furnaces might grace the Whitecliff works. His future success as an ironmaster now seemed certain.

References and Comments

1. Standing, I.J., 1980. The Whitecliff Ironworks in the Forest of Dean, 1798 to 1808. Journ. Glos. Soc. Ind. Arch. 1980, pp 18-28.
2. Mushet Correspondence, The Pye Smith Collection, D 2646. Another group of letters, D 637/11/B1, extends the correspondence to 1813 and will be covered in part 3.
3. Fisher, C., 1978. The Free Miners of the Forest of Dean, 1800 to 1841. published in: Independant Collier, The Coal Miner as archaetypal proletarian reconsidered. Hussock, Harvest Press 1978.
4. Osborn, F.M., 1952. The Story of the Mushets. London. Nelson. This biography deals chiefly with David Mushet and his son Robert Forester Mushet. Much additional information on the Alfreton and Coleford periods of David Mushet can now be added.
5. Wilson Lowry was an engraver and a geologist. Listed in D.N.B.
6. "Roman Cinder" is a reference to bloomery slags, rich in residual iron which the primitive smelting techniques, in use before blast furnaces, had failed to extract. References in the letters to "rich ore", "grey ore" and "brush ore" all refer to Dean iron ores won from the Carboniferous Limestone. They are commercially termed brown haematites. The reference to "ironstone" is less exact and may have more than one meaning. The sort procured "close to the furnace" is certainly little more than a ferruginous limestone, ie a leanly mineralized limestone. The "ironstone" sought after so earnestly by Mushet in the early letters was most probably an iron ore of a quite different sort - nodules or seams of iron carbonate derived from the Coal Measures. These would have been widely used beyond the Dean at this time. See "pin ironstone" infra.
7. "Blooms". These 19th. century blooms were a forged product made from refined pig iron and ready for further forging and rolling at tin plate works. These blooms should not be confused with blooms of the pre blast furnace era. The refining of pig iron was done at Whitecliff, presumably in some sort of reverberatory furnace.
8. "Pin Ironstone". This must be a nodular iron ore derived from the Coal Measures. Such ores are uncommon in the Dean, see Sibly, T.F., Haematites of the Forest of Dean and South Wales, 1927, p 57. The sale particulars of the Darkhill Ironworks, in 1845, imply productive amounts beneath the Coleford High Delph coal, see G.R.O. D 637/11/B4. Specimens of "ironstone" derived from the seat earth of the Yorkley coal near Broadwell, and examined by the present writer in 1976, seemed to consist mainly of iron pyrites.
9. G.R.O. D192/4.
10. Clissold, G. and Standing, I.J., 1980. "Mr. Teague's Railway" - Some new information, Journ. Glos. Soc. Ind. Arch. 1980, pp 51-60.
11. Examined by kind permission of the Deputy Gaveller, Mr A.E. Howell, Crown Offices, Coleford.
12. see letter dated 4th June 1808.
13. Memoir of the late Rev. Isaiah Birt, by the Rev. John Birt. Baptist Mag. for 1838, pp 54-59 and 107-116.

14. Information kindly supplied by the Rev. C.S. Hall of Bristol Baptist College. Much interesting material is presented by T. Bright in *The Rise of Nonconformity in the Forest of Dean, Coleford 1953*.
15. Bristol Baptist College, written minutes of a meeting held 28/12/1780, kindly recorded by the Rev. C.S. Hall in a letter to the present author dated 19/11/80.
16. Patent No. 2697 of the year 1806.
17. Information supplied by letters dated 5/11/80, 18/11/80 and 15/12/80 from the Rev. C.S. Hall to the present author.
18. see T. Bright, p 25, op cit supra (14).
19. Bapt. Hist. Soc. Trans. VII, 1918-21.
20. see Hart, C.E., 1971. *Industrial History of Dean* pp 401-2.
21. Stratford, J., 1867. *Good and Great Men of Gloucestershire*. Much of this material is reprinted by T. Bright, op cit, supra (14). A tunnel scheme beneath the River Severn was begun in 1810-12, near Bullo Pill and the proprietors included personalities associated with the Forest of Dean Tramroad. At present there is no evidence to link W. Bradley with this scheme, but it coincides with Bradley's active period.
22. Bapt. Hist. Soc. Trans. VII, 1918-21.
23. A Plan of an intended variation and extension of the Severn & Wye Railway... deposited by W. Bradley, 1/5/1810. GRO Q RUM 37.
24. Gale application books see (11) supra
25. Stratford, J., 1887. *Gloucestershire Biographical Notes*. pp 228-36.
26. G.R.O. D637 V/4: assorted papers.
27. G.R.O. D637 V/4. This is a complex legal document. James Teague was to pay Thomas Nicholson £3,000 in installments of £500. These payments were linked to Thomas Halford paying James Teague installments of £500.
28. see (25) supra
29. G.R.O. D637/11/7/B1
30. Paar, H.W., 1965. *Great Western Railway in Dean* pp 89, 93, 161. Also Paar, H.W., 1963. *Severn and Wye Railway*, p 26.
31. G.R.O. D2646/78
32. See Fisher, op cit, supra (3) also Hart, C.E., 1966. *Royal Forest O.U.P* also Clissold, G., and Standing, I.J. op cit, supra (10) with regard to the Crown attitude to tramroads. The indifference of the capitalists is well portrayed in a letter from Halford concerning brick making dated June 7th. 1809.
33. John Walkinshaw appears to have come to Coleford in 1810 as David Mushet's employee, was still employed by the Mushet family in 1847, and still resided at Coleford in 1859, when he was active in the Coleford Mechanics and Literary Institute. Some of his letters are reprinted in C.E. Hart's *Industrial History of Dean* pp 137/8. Osborn, op cit supra (4) states that Walkinshaw moved from Scotland with Mushet in 1810 but this can now be ammended. Miss Mushet's book *Something about Coleford, 1877* also contains a few biographical notes.

34. Holder's Land. Must be plots 23 and 26 shown in the Plan of Coleford, and lends credence to the faintly mapped double feature being a water course. The purpose of this water course (and the reservoir mentioned in the letters) is unclear, for the ironworks were powered by steam engine. Perhaps the water course supplied water for the boilers and possibly powered some of the paint works machinery? The mapped feature runs through the garden of the present author but no trace now remains at any point along its length.
35. see Paar, H.W. op.cit supra (30)
36. This is the Severn and Wye tramroad Bill.
37. For details of the customs and privileges of free miners see Hart, C.E., *The Free Miners*, 1953. For a general account of the coal trade around Coleford see Standing, I.J., *The Mining of Coal in the Coleford District*, Journ. Glos. Soc. Ind. Arch. 1980, pp 38-45.

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Acknowledgements

Much help and assistance has been received from:

the County Archivist and his staff at the Gloucestershire Records Office, for access to very many documents and permission to reproduce Plan 1.

the Rev. C.S. Hall of Bristol Baptist College for much fascinating material on the Rev. Isaiah Birt and his family.

the Deputy Gaveller, Mr. A.E. Howell, Crown Office, Coleford, for access to maps and gale books.

The published works of Dr. C.E. Hart and Mr. H.W. Paar, for without their meticulous research the material presented here would have small context. In addition Harry Paar undertook much archival searching in pursuit of Thomas Halford whilst Cyril Hart read the manuscript and suggested many useful improvements. My grateful thanks to you all.

I.J. Standing

Rock House

Coleford

28th December 1981.

PLAN 1.A Map of Coleford and Whitecliff in 1809.

Scale about 6 inches to one mile. A detail taken from "A Plan of a Proposed Railway in and from the Forest of Dean through Coleford, Newland and Redbrook... deposited by Mr. (Astley) Bowdler of Coleford, 30th. September 1809." Original in Glos. Records Office and reproduced with their kind permission.

The firm black line is the proposed Monmouth to Coleford Tramroad, eventually built in 1812. Two furnaces are depicted at the ironworks, with an inclined way leading from Whitecliff lane to the furnace head. There is a pond to the south east of the furnaces, in the valley, and presumably fed by Thurston's Brook. The faint double feature, finely penned, from plot 22 and running to the furnace head, more or less parallel to the tramroad may be the watercourse referred to in the letters. Alternately, it may depict a second inclined way or "gang road" of gentle gradient. (See reference 34).

The ownership and tenure of the plots is:

<u>Number</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Occupier and Description</u>
13	George Dew	Halford & Co. Poolway Farm.
14	James Yarworth	- "
15	Cap ⁿ Henry Probyn	- "
16	James Yarworth	- "
17	" "	Thomas Porter, carpenter.
18	Back Lane.	-
19	James Yarworth	-
20	" "	(Thomas Nicholson in 1811)
21	John Morgan	himself
22	John Richards	himself
23	Thomas Holder	himself
24	John Watts	himself (Owned by Jas. Trotter in 1811)
25	Thomas Porter and William Hawkins	John Young
26	Thomas Holder	himself
27	Samual Symonds	James Teague (Whitecliff Farm).
28	James Teague del. Halford & Co. sub.	themselves (The Ironworks).
29	Jane Quick	James Hawkins (Halford & Co. by 1811)
30	Lord Gage	Abel Wood Watkins

The additional material dated 1811, comes from a notebook G.R.O. D2347.

PLAN

