

The testimony of William Henry Kaye's early life *(transcribed from the handwritten manuscript by Felicity Kaye)*

“Previous to 1853 there was a saw sharpener in Leicester named Elliot, who was a bachelor. He was a cousin of my grandfather who was the village carpenter, wheelwright, and made the furniture for the natives of Upper Cumberworth and Denby Dale, near Huddersfield. He also made the beer barrels for the brewery near that, and was the landlord of the local pub. His oldest son was G R Kaye, he was a very lame man, and his inclinations were on mechanics.

During his yearly visits to my grandfather, Mr Elliott noticed this trait and persuaded my grandfather to let him take the lad to Leicester to learn him the art of saw repairing. In due time Mr Elliott died and left his small business to my uncle G R Kaye. He had some good ideas on mechanics and in due time he invented quite a lot of very useful tools and some of his ideas were greatly appreciated in the Melton Mowbray cooked meat trade. He soon had more work than he could do himself, and then he persuaded his next brother, William Kaye, to come to Leicester and learn the trade. Later on he also persuaded my father, T S Kaye, to come to Leicester and that was the beginning of the Kaye connection with the saw and tool trade.

William Kaye later on left his brother G R Kaye and started business in Nottingham. He did fairly well there and that set my father thinking he would like to be a master, so at about 20 years of age he started to go to school in the evening. Up to then he had never been to school, so he set about educating himself for the future life and started courting. At that time he had a friend from a village outside Leicester who was an apprentice butcher and on Sundays my father used to walk over to Countesthorpe and he soon fixed up with the butcher's sister and as the butcher was also courting the four of them got married together. During that time my father tried to better his earnings and worked till late every night. He bought a plot of land and built two houses on it with the help of three friends, one a bricklayer, one a plumber and one a joiner. My father was the labourer and so these three men and the four of them entirely built the two houses without any outside help. He lived in one house and let the other for a few years and saved up about £300 and then looked for a town to settle down in. So he came to Hull in 1877 and took over the saw repairing and tool business of Thomas Thacker. He sold his two houses for £600, but was still a bit short of capital needed to get started, so his brother William, let him have 300, but insisted on having his name on the business papers, and so, for about three years, this business was W & T S Kaye late Thomas Thacker – established 1848.

This Thomas Thacker was also a bird stuffer as well as a saw maker, but my father was not interested in dead birds except as food, so that part of the business just died out. My father had an arrangement with Mr Thacker that he would come in when my father had to go to Sheffield etc . This Mr Thacker used to work as a saw maker with W M Tyzack, the founder of W M Tyzack Sons, & Turner when he was a boy and before they went to their present works at Heeley Sheffield. He took a great interest in me when I was a small child, I was born in the shop two months after my father started here, September 1877. My mother served the customers while my father did the work.

This Mr Thacker was one of those wonderful businessmen who generally land up near the poorhouse in their old age. He used the purchase money to buy a Brickyard on the banks of the Humber, and about every Spring the Humber would come into Brickyard and swill away all his profits. When he came on duty at the shop used to put me on a stool alongside the anvil (three and four years old) and show me how to hammer saws etc. He had a way with him that would interest any child and I used to “have a go” at saw making under his instructions, and more or less knew where to hit the saw before I started to go to school. My father was the first man in the ironmongery trade in Hull to import wire nails; they came from France in one cwt. wood barrels and about 1882 my father extended the shop, taking over a jeweller's shop and this made the tool shop at the corner with a corner entrance. I had to help him with these extensions, filling the nail barrels with the plaster from the dividing walls. Shortly after this business extension, I was sleeping with my father, and about 5 a.m. we were knocked up. The warehouse was on fire, the local fire brigade came with the full equipment on a handcart and soon got the manual pumps, worked by four men, at work and in a few hours had the fire out - that was the fire brigade in Hull at that time. A curious thing about this fire was to see the barrel shaped heaps of wire nails with the wood barrel burnt away. The insurance company paid out my father and sold the residue which was all bar iron, nails, and heavy black ironmongery, and made £80 profit

out of the sale. My father was a bit sore about this and often talked about the why and wherefore of it all, so at that early age I learnt a lot about insurance and how it works, which goes to prove that it is never too young to learn.

It was the custom of my father to go to Sheffield about every month, buying tools etc and one I was five years old it was time that I went with him, and at that age I started to visit the various real makers of tools and have kept it up all my life. He believed in starting us off young and all my school days these visits were kept up, and long before I left school I had a good knowledge of the tool trade from the Sheffield angle.

At this stage myself and elder sister did not care for porridge and our mother had other views, and it was quite usual for us both to be tied to the mangle until we asked for what we had left and we took great interest in watching the stone masons building the Savings Bank opposite to us, until we got that hungry that we had to ask for the cold porridge, nothing was ever left on the plate while my mother was on deck.

In 1884 she died and left my father with six children, the oldest 18 years old and he had his hands full with trying to bring us all up with the help of 12 different housekeepers in nine months. We changed our living quarters from the shop to the edge of the town and after we had all nearly driven our father crazy he thought that he would go to the village near Leicester for a holiday. The result was that we all had a new mother, he married his butcher's pals' widow. She had two boys and that made us into a family of eight. Her eldest son had just left school at 12 year so he was ready for work so he came in advance and started work – a week later father and mother arrived. This lad was named John Ringrose and from that day to the end of his life at 60 years he was a worker 100 percent. Our new mother completely spoiled us all, we all did as we liked she was never cross or annoyed at anything we ever did and right up to her death at 86 years every one of her stepchildren and her own would do anything for her.

In those days we had one earth closet, she persuaded by father to make some alterations that we could have five, all in a row, but at different heights to suit our various ages, she said it was better that way. We have all memories of many pleasant hours spent there with a candle to light up the place. None of those have ever had constipation or any of the illnesses that comes from that, which only goes to prove that there is more than one way to keep healthy.

In 1885 my father thought it would be a good idea to have a stall in the open market on a Saturday, so he did so, and sent my brother John at 12 years of age to manage it. I was on duty all Saturday at the shop (eight years old) and it was my duty, after we had closed the shop about 11 to 11:30 p.m. to call round at the stall in the market and help to dismantle it and take the stock and is my brother home (about 3 miles). We were generally very tired and as soon as we got out of the winding streets of the old town we tied the reins to a hook, and most of the journey found us asleep before we got home, but the pony always knew the way and we never had an accident. Apart from the regular tools we sold at the shop, we could always get some suitable tools for the market on our monthly visits to Sheffield.

About that time my father had let a boxmaking firm in Hull too much credit and when they went bust he was sore about it. They started up again and that made him more sore than ever, so he went into partnership with another boxmaker to take their trade away from them, and get his own back that way. I was too young then to understand the logic of it all on one I grew older and got more business sense I thought it was all damn silly. It all meant that after I left school at 4 p.m. I would go to the mill and make boxes while bedtime (10 or 11 o'clock). This was not so bad in the Summer time, but in the Winter it often happened that two of us would fetch our pony and rully from the shop and have two or three loads of boxes to the fishing trawlers and land home about 3 a.m. My mother would have a hot drink present have the bed warmed up with a large copper warming pan, and after a good night's leap wake us up just in time to get to school before the register was closed. Sometimes the last load of boxes were taken to a fish curing house where the kippers and smoked haddock came from, and then we were well away. The smokehouse Foreman would give us some kippers and we would roast them on his shale shovel, and have a good feed before going home, we used to look forward to these beanfeasts.

Generally on a Saturday I would be sent to the docks to bring home timber to the mills and I used to get two loads and before dinner. One Saturday (I was 8 ½ years old then) I got the rully to the edge of the dock and got my three ton of timber all fastened down, and when I wanted the horse to come forward it went in reverse, and backed the whole lot into the dock including me. We went to the bottom but came up again, I was hung around the horse's neck. The dock men soon rescued us and steered the load of timber under a crane and we were on land again. After drying my clothes out over the watchman's hut fire I set off to the mill with the load, and was severely told off for only getting one load in instead of two.

About this time, during school holidays I went with my father to Leicestershire, and as we used to buy Oakum from Leicester Gaol, he took me with him to inspect what they had for sale, and bid a price for it. So I went to the gaol at a very early age when I was nine. We were without a horse for a short time and one Saturday a customer on the fish docks wanted half a ton of Oakum, so it was loaded on a handcarts (20 round taper bundles) and myself, and a brother 10 years old, set off with this lot three miles. To get onto the dock was by subway and this was nearly always from six inches to two feet deep in dirty water. We used to take our trousers off when we went through this. We could not push the cart up the slope and we were unlucky getting help from passing rullys, so we rolled each bundle up the slope until we had seen of them at the top and then pushed the cart up with the rest up the slope. As we got to the top, a passing rully caught the sixteen bundles and knocked them down and they rolled into the dirty water. Eventually we got them all up and when we got to the customer he would not accept them because they were all wet and sodden, so we had to take the more back to the shop and got told off good and proper. They have improved that subway since, but in those days it was a regular thing to see men without trousers pushing carts through it.

A few months after this incident this firm built a ships boat, and when they wanted to get it into the water it was too big to get out of the shop and they had to knock the front of the building out to get it outside, so along with others, we felt we could laugh at them and it helped secure soreness against them.

At that time we used import from Belgium and Germany wire nails in cwt. bags, and they came in 10 and 20 ton lots from Rotterdam and that was a regular job after school hours fetching them from the docks near our shop. We had a man who used to go out and sell these and other ironmongery and naturally it was sold at low profits owing to the keen competition, and although there was plenty of saw repairs always coming in, and my brother John and one man in the repair shop were fully occupied, and had more work than they should have to do, my father seemed to be fascinated with this ironmongery trade were all the meagre profits was swallowed up with distributive expenses, instead of leaning more to the saw and tool repairing and selling side of the business which was mostly cash. It certainly annoyed these two men when they had to knock off work and help to get ten to twenty tons of nails put in the warehouse, and then repeat the process in reverse when the "Traveller" went and sold a few tons. I was too young then to interfere, but I could weigh up which one was the best part of the business, but my father was the boss and if we spoke too loud he soon told us off. The result was that my father was often in a fix for money. The sawmill venture was a losing affair and the heavy ironmongery was not very profitable. Now and again some customer would go bust and the small profits did not allow of that. But the saw repairing and tool selling was always a good horse, and my brother John was always steadily working and increasing this end, and it really had to keep all the rest.

It was the custom in those days to pay accounts with three and four months bills and when these became due it was often a struggle to have the money at the bank and sometimes my father and the "Traveller" would have a whip round among some of our customers to collect the necessary cash, and on the last day of the three days grace he would send me to the bank after 3 o'clock with what cash there was, and when it was short I had a note to give to the bank manager asking him to meet the bill and the balance, generally £4 or £5, would be sent in tomorrow. This manager was a brusque sort of man and used to read the note and then let off steam and then I had to do my little bit. My father had instructed me that when the manager started off I should start to cry, and as he could not stand a child crying, he would say yes and sometimes give me a 6d for myself. My father never let him down, he always did what he promised to do, but he did not like to ask these favours himself, and sent his ten year old son to do it.

About this time he closed down the sawmill and there was over £1000 to find to clear that up and that had to come out of the saw repairing and tools, and it would take time to raise, and owing to his good character

among the timber people here, it was agreed that he should pay this off in regular weekly payments which she kept up regularly. It was my job to take this to one of the timber merchants office, who had made himself responsible for its collection, and he would always see me himself and write the receipt out himself, pat me on the head and give me 6d, and generally remind me that I should grow up like my father. This man was a rare type in business, a real Victorian gentleman. He died when I was about 20 and whenever he came to the shop he would always stop and have a chat and give me a bit of advice which I duly took notice of.

In those days finance was a great problem and it was no doubt handled in different ways by different people. Mr Thacker was the owner of the premises occupied by my father, and the rent at that time was £60 per year. Mr Thacker still owned and ran his brickyard on the opposite bank of the Humber and had a sloop to bring his bricks to Hull. When the sloop wanted repairing he had it done by a Mr Day, a local builder of sloop's etc. This Mr Day was a customer of my fathers for his tools and ironmongery etc. These three men were always financially embarrassed, and when there was a bit on the slates of all of them, and each wanted a little cash they would draw up a 3 or 4 months Bill jointly, and so wipe out their account to date and have a little to go on with. This bill would be taken to a bill discounter who would for a consideration, cash it, and all was alright until it was due for payment when they would all three put in what they could to meet it, and any shortage would form the ground work, along with the current trade accounts for a new bill, and so it would go on and on. My father generally came out of it with any settlement of Mr Day's account, and also a receipt for a quarters rent from Mr Thacker, and when Mr Thacker's lawyers later asked my father to pay the rents to them in future instead of to Mr Thacker, he would produce five quarters rent receipts in advance, which was not so bad for a man who never went to school when he was a lad. In this and other ways I got to know quite a lot about finance which has been of great benefit in later years.

When my father came to Hull, the regular best quality joiners hand saws were only of two styles, Best Cast Steel and London Spring at 5/6d and 6/6d each. The Hollow Back Saw was not on the map then. He sold a lot of these saws and it was not a convenient saw for a shipwright to use, and he was often asked by the local ships' carpenters is to cut their saws about 1 inch narrower. After doing this a few hundred times, he thought it would be common sense if he got these Narrow Point Saws especially made for ships carpenters use, and after his experience in altering the wide saws he designed a special handsaw for the ships carpenters' use. At that time there were two large and several small shipyards in Hull and district, and this Narrow Point Handsaw was soon very popular and we sold it at 3/9d. As all our saws at that time were marked with our name and it was the only one on the market, we got orders from ships carpenters all over the country. So years went on and there was a general demand for this saw, and the saw making firms tested it both here and in America. The Americans even made their Hollow Backsaw in later years in the Narrow Point style which was of course, all wrong, as there was no strength in it.

In the early days of iron and steel shipbuilding, the drills used for making the holes for the rivets were generally made in the shipyard workshops (this was before electric drills and twist drills came in). The drillers were on piecework and when the drill was dull they had to waste a lot of time in from the shipside to the grindstone to grind their drills. Some of them would come and buy saw files and tried to sharpen them up at the shipside, but the general file was not suitable, so my father experimented with different files until he got the hang of the whole thing, and then went to Sheffield and got them a special file made out of a higher carbon steel than the usual saw file, and left a harder temper than the usual saw file. This done the trick alright and we had a big sale for these files all over the coast where ships were made. I helped him with these experiments and went with him to the file factory, so I had this well and truly knocked into me at a very early age. However, he made a big mistake here, these files should have been marked Kaye – Hull, instead of that they had the makers name on, and while Kayes done well with them, the makers did better, and they eventually got orders from other towns for this file which otherwise would have come here.

When I was 9 ½ years old, we used to get a few grinding jobs come to the shop, and as we had no grindstone my father arranged with a furniture works near the near, that he would provide them with a grindstone free, if he was allowed to go and use it when he wanted to. As this stone was 3 ½ feet diameter, was a bit too big to do the scissors on, so he provided another one about 16 inches in diameter, and this was a very good arrangement, satisfactory to both sides. My father did all this grinding and I would pour the water on the stone and help in other ways. This firm went bust shortly after and this arrangement ended, so we rigged up a

grindstone in the room over the shop where I was born. My father bought a 6 feet diameter cast iron wheel that weighed 2 ½ cwt. and it was a problem to get this wheel into this room on the third floor, and while three of them were thinking it all out, our saw sharpener pushed them on one side and put his shoulder under the centre of it and took it up three flights of stairs without putting it down until he was in the room. This grinding shop was a man power affair, the belt went round the six feet rim and onto the pulley of the stone and it suited alright, and one afternoon, when I came in from school, he asked me to come and turn the grindstone and he was grinding one of our saw tooth punching dies. I was not strong enough to do this, so he started it up and got plenty of speed on and told me to catch the handle as it came round and keep it up. Instead, the handle caught me in the stomach and flung me at the wall, and I fell to the floor and the handle just caught me in the back as I lay on the floor, until I became unconscious, and when the speed died down he found me there, so he carried me down and as I had a big lump on my forehead and a pain in my back, he bathed my head and sent me home on the tram. When I got off the tram I was dizzy and fell on the road and cut my head again, so I was at home for a few days.

When I was 10 to 11 years old we moved our residence into the Town so as to be nearer the shop, and my father bought a small wholesale hardware business which supplied principally Hawkers, and as he had taken a house and shop he moved this business to it, and my oldest sister was put in charge. So when we went to Sheffield we used to buy goods suitable for this shop, like scissors, cast-iron, at 10/60d a gross assorted three sizes, sell them to the Hawkers at 1/6d a dozen, and they would hawk them to the houses saying their brother made them in Sheffield, and they were only a 1/- to 1/6d a pair.. Sometimes a Hawker would only have 3d or 6d to start the day with, but later on he would be back for a few dozen. Another good line was a Britannia metal teapot that cost us 2/5d and 2/11d if it was silver plated, and they were sold in the same way as the scissors. The Germans have never made scissors as cheap as the Sheffield ones.

This shop takings paid the rent and rates of this house, so this was one of the ventures my father had that was coming out alright. Shortly after we flitted here an old saw sharpener at Scarborough died to my father bought his outfit. There was a growing family of us here and perhaps it was looking into the future. When he went to Scarborough to see about getting this business going, my father noticed that furniture was more expensive there than at Hull, and at that time a lot of the furniture makers in Hull owed my father money long overdue for tools and ironmongery. He thought that it would be a good idea all round to get furniture where he could not get money in Hull, and sent it to Scarborough, and more or less got his account squared up that way. So that is what happened. He sent a man to run it who was a joiner in his young days and later a small ironmonger, and he used to go over every few weeks to see how it was going on. This was a combined ironmongery, tools and furniture shop and if any saws came into repair they were just sent to Hull to have the needful done at them. This went on for some time and my father came to the conclusion that it was time that this Scarborough business was put under new management as it was not paying, and he was puzzled to know why.

So when I was 11 years and nine months old he took me from school and sent me to Scarborough to take over the complete management of this shop and gave me strict instructions as to what I should do. When the school master noticed that I was not at school he came round to tell my father that I could not leave school before I was 12 years old, and that only if I had passed the sixth standard, otherwise I would have to stop while I was fourteen. This was a bit of bad news for my father but he kept me at Scarborough until the Sunday before I was 12, and he came to relieve me so that I could go to school on the Monday morning as the examinations started on Tuesday. The schoolmaster was very annoyed about the way my father had handled the job and said it was hopeless to expect me to pass out when I had not been to school for three months. But he was a good man, and he had me with him all the day, and took me to his homed after school, and crammed as much into me as he could and I got through three days examinations with 86% marks and went back to Scarborough on Saturday to take over, and my father came home. Later on he told me that the schoolmaster had been giving him a piece of his mind. At this church school we used to pay 3d or 4d a week. At the year and the congregation of the church had a whip round and bought a silver watch about £5 to give to the scholar with the most marks of the year. It took about 4800 marks to get this watch and I missed by three marks only. If my father had let me stop at school another day I would have won it, and I did not forget to let him know about it, so a few weeks after he sent me a silver watch. It was a second-hand one and after having it repaired three times at a total cost of 12/6d I put it on one side as I could not afford that luxury out

of my salary of one shilling a week as Manager. I used to buy 1 ounce of tobacco 3d and two weekly papers 2d, and the 7d balance went to provide myself with clothed. So I bought I bought one of Tommy Chapman's 2/11d watches, and it lasted until 1917 without expense. This was not as bad as it looked as occasionally a traveller would give me 6d or 1/- and this all helped., it was the custom in those days to do so and Mr Boulton who used to call my uncle in Leicester, and also came to Hull, always used to have tea with us when we lived over the shop, and when I was a baby in the cradle he used to give me 6d, and he came to Hull till after I was married and always gave me something. It was also the custom for travellers to take the boss, as we called my father, to the pub and get well lubricated before they talked about orders, the traveller cannot afford it today, and it is a good job that this customer has stopped. We have not time either for it. It is all for the best.

When I went to Scarborough we lived in lodgings, but we both had a better idea so we rented a house in St Thomas Walked and started housekeeping. We let the ground floor to the people next door for nearly the rent we had to pay so it only stood us to a 1/-a week. This man was 45 years old and had been to Australia and he was a natural comedian, he just could not help it, and he would have been a welcome addition to the Fred Karnos Troop. He spoke the real undiluted East Yorkshire dialect perfectly. My father told me to keep him in food and lodgings and give him 15/-a week and also to treat him to a bottle of Bass (3d) each night after we closed down. So we both used to go to Renders Pub in Queen Street and after he had properly refreshed we would go for a walk before going home. When he got a bit excited he used to stutter and then he as good as any music hall turn, and his beer was then drunk off quick and he would look at me but my orders was one only so there was nothing doing. He always had the smoke room in uproar, and the landlord would bring him another on the house and that always meant walking slowly home. He was the same with the customers at the shop. After the season was over there generally was one or another of the boarding houses being sold up and we used buy there anything in the furniture line that we could resell, we took the best of this house, and we soon had a very nice home from our point of view. We had enough pots, and cups and saucers to run an Hotel, and we used to have a good wash-up about once a month and then fill all the cupboards up with clean plates etc. and go on until they all wanted doing up again. We had small carpets and we drove two files near the top of the window, and at bedtime we hung a carpet on these files. It was to us a better idea than having real curtains. We had breakfast at home, lunch at a restaurant, tea at the shop, supper at home (Sometimes). On Sundays we had two Pounds of beef steak and made it a combined breakfast/dinner and then went into the country while bedtime, and we had many happy Sundays together, and we were known in all the villages around Scarborough. After having beefsteak for about four months Billy fancied a duck, but as the oven had never been cleaned out it took us while about 3 o'clock to attempt to cook it. So we took it out of the oven when it was black in some places and raw in others, and as soon as he had stuck the knife into it nearly poisoned us. He had forgotten to take its inside out before cooking it, so we had to go round to the restaurant and have dinner there. After that we stuck to beefsteak, which only goes to prove that fancy cooking should be only done by specialists like one's mother or wife. We bought a stock of Draper from the official receiver once for £35 including everything in the office. I sent all the books etc, to Hull and my father said they were worth the £35, but among this stock was over 3000 linen collars and fronts, so we filled up two opposite corners of the shop with these, one collar only 1d each and the other collars with fronts 2d each. I think we had all the working women in Scarborough in the shop trying to find some that fitted their husbands, and if they could not find what they wanted Billy would come along and stir up the heap with a manure fork and it was real amusing to see the effect, they generally found what they wanted then.

Near the shop was a high-class furniture shop kept by an old Victorian gentleman, and I became very friendly with him. He had the job of furnishing the Marquee at the Cricket Festival, and he asked me to be his lad there while it was on. So I had the privilege of seeing the best cricketers of England and Australia for nine days for nothing, and plenty of good food thrown in. I saw Dr Grace score the biggest hit ever made in first-class cricket, batting from the far end of the ground he lifted a ball clean over the roofs of the houses into Trafalgar Square.

While I was having quite an enjoyable time at Scarborough I did not look upon it as a future career and I was always asking my father to let me come home and do something really useful. He wanted me to stay at Scarborough, as I was making the shop pay alright, but I stuck to my own convictions and he eventually gave way and dug out of hiding a brother who did not care for school and the body snatchers were looking for

him, so he sent him to me to learn the business. He was with me for about three months and during that time our man had rather a rotten time with the pranks to be played on him.

So after 21 months as a manager of a prosperous business I came home at the age of 13 ½ to learn a real trade and start work in earnest. Within six months' time the shop at Scarborough was closed down, my brother and the man there both had the same ideas and making a shop pay was not one of them. My father was kind enough to keep me on the same salary as apprentice that he had paid me as manager (1/- a week) so I was not financially embarrassed by this change. We always had plenty of saw repairs, more than my brother John and our man could get through so I was welcome. My father was still fascinated with ironmongery, and as John and myself could not see any future in it compared with tools and repairs, and about this time one of the ironmongery customers went bankrupt let my father in for £89 and there was no dividend. Also, our traveller sold 5 tons of wire nails through a gross profit of 3/8d, and for that 3/8d we had to fetch them from the docks, put them in the warehouse, fetch them out, and take them to our customer 2 miles away, pay cash for them and give three months credit, and pay a traveller through his salary. So we both went on strike, and told our father he could do all this lugging about himself, we were sharpening saws and we were not going to knock off to help him with the rotten business. So after a few months without our co-operation he decided to give up the ironmongery section and devote himself and others to cultivating the tool trade. It took him a few months to get rid of the traveller, but eventually we saw him go, and we told our father a few things that had been on our minds for a long time. Within a few months this man was in gaol, he had found out that other people were not so easy-going as our father."

Terms used in the transcript, with modern explanations

Cwt: 1 hundredweight (= 112 imperial pounds weight = 50.8 kilos)

A rully: A rully is a horse-drawn flat-bed waggon, which could take about 3 tons in weight. They were apparently very common and the equivalent of a transit van of today.

Earth closet: old type of toilet. probably without drainage except into the soil

Box making firm: a firm that made boxes, in this case for the fish dock, for packing fish

Shale shovel: a shovel for lifting up loose pieces of rock 'shale'

Oakum: was used in shipbuilding for the caulking or packing joints of timber in wooden vessels and the deck planking of iron and steel ships, as well as cast iron pipes. It was loose hemp or jute fibre obtained by unpicking old ropes which were then impregnated with tar, pitch or creosote.

6d: six pence (12 pence = 1 shilling / 20 shillings = 1 pound)

5/6d: five shillings and 6 pence

Rivet: a permanent mechanical fastener, used in the tool trade

Hollow backsaw: a type of hand saw

Grindstone: a round sharpening stone for grinding or sharpening

1/6 a dozen: one shilling 6 pence per dozen (12)

10/60 a gross: 10 shillings 60 per gross (1 gross = 12 dozen = 144)

Linen collars and fronts: white collars and shirt fronts worn as evening wear under jackets