

**A BLOOD-LINE STUDY OF THE GILBERTS' OF
OSGATHORPE, FROM 1675 TO 1929**



1ST DRAFT – ONGOING PROJECT

BY SAMUEL T STEWART – JANUARY 2025

PREFACE

Although information on the Gilberts' of Osgathorpe is recorded in the author's publication entitled 'Asgotporp to Osgathorpe', which is free to download and read on his website samuelstewart.com it was felt that this old family who contributed considerably to the social and industrial history of the village of Osgathorpe, and the wider area, deserved a separate more detailed study and publication. Of the many Gilbert's buried in St. Mary's church, Osgathorpe grave yard, sadly, only two identifiable graves remain, photographs of which feature later. They are, those of Thomas and his wife Ann Gilbert (nee. Woodcock) and their grandson James and his wife Lucy Anne.

The publication follows the basic history of this particular family bloodline as accurately as research information allows.

COMPLIMENTARY READING

'**From Asgotporp to Osgathorpe**' provides a comprehensive history of the NW Leicestershire medieval village of Osgathorpe, which was first recorded in 'The Domesday Book'. This can be downloaded on the author's website under subsection 'Multi Topic books'

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks to Lynne Dyer for allowing the use of certain information and photographs relating to James and Josiah Gilbert which appear on pages 26 to 28 of this publication:-

You are welcome to quote passages from any of my posts, with appropriate credit. The correct citation for this looks as follows:

Dyer, Lynne (2022). Zeppelins, Charnwood Museum, and the Gilberts. Available from: <https://lynneaboutloughborough.blogspot.com/2022/01/zeppelins-charnwood-museum-and-gilberts.html>

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SAMUEL & ELIZABETH GILBERT

The author believes that the following Samuel and Elizabeth Gilbert were the first of the various lines / branches of the Gilberts' in Osgathorpe.

The surname Gilbert is recorded as meaning "bright pledge", and was derived from the Old German elements gisa "pledge, hostage" and beraht "bright". The Normans introduced this name to England, where it was common during the Middle Ages. It was borne by a 12th-century English saint, the founder of the religious order known as the Gilbertines.

The earliest record of the Gilbert surname that the author has found in the Osgathorpe parish records is that of Samuel and Elizabeth Gilbert, who were recorded as being the parents of Elizabeth who was baptised at St. Mary's church, Osgathorpe on the 20th of April 1675. Elizabeth died at the age of 3 and was buried in St. Mary's church graveyard on the 3rd of March 1676. There is no record in the registers showing that Samuel and Elizabeth were married in Osgathorpe. A son, Thomas, was then baptised on the 3rd of February 1676, followed by a daughter Mary on the 9th of April 1678. (**Note** - A Mary Gilbert was buried in St. Mary's church graveyard on the 31st of October 1701 and another Mary Gilbert (a clergyman's widow) was buried on the 6th of October 1733. Whether either of these are Samuel and Elizabeth's daughter Mary is not known. A son Samuel was baptised on the 8th of June 1683 followed by another daughter Abia on the 13th of October 1685. This is the last of their children's recorded in the parish baptism records.

There is a record of an Elizabeth Gilbert being buried in St. Mary's graveyard on the 30th of August 1714 and Samuel Gilbert being buried on the 28th of December 1717. it is almost certain that this was the above mother and father Samuel and Elizabeth.

The parish records show that a Thomas Gilbert married Elizabeth Mee on the 1st of April 1706, and it is thought that this was Samuel and Elizabeth's son Thomas recorded above.

The next record for of a Gilbert being baptised in Osgathorpe was for Samuel Gilbert, recorded as the son of Samuel and Ellen, on the 29th of March 1723, which was followed by a second son James baptised on the 11th of December 1724.

A second Samuel and Elizabeth Gilbert now appear in the parish baptism records which confuses matters somewhat. This Samuel Gilbert is thought to be the son of the above Samuel and Ellen. Samuel married Elizabeth Robinson by banns in July 1754 at St. Mary's, Osgathorpe. They had a son Samuel who was baptised at St. Mary's on the 6th of June 1755. It is thought that this Samuel married Margaret Johnson by Banns at St. Mary's on the 18th of March 1783 (witnesses were George Illsley and Ellen Gilbert). Another son James was baptised on the 13th of August 1756. A daughter Ellen was then baptised on the 23rd of July 1758. It is thought that it was this Ellen who married Joseph King of Osgathorpe by Banns at St. Mary's on March the 28th 1797. A James Gilbert was buried in St. Mary's graveyard on the 26th of June 1787. On this occasion the parent's names were omitted but it was quite like to be Samuel and Elizabeth's son.

Samuel Gilbert was buried on the 28th of October 1806 (Bishop's transcripts recorded 5th of March) in St. Mary's graveyard, but it is not possible to say which of the Samuel's mention above it was.

NOTE: It has not been possible to relate the following names which appear in the parish records to any particular family with any certainty:-

George Hall married Mary Gilbert on the 1st of May 1711 at St. Mary's

Thomas Gilbert married Ann Allwood on the 14th of October 1711 at St. Mary's

Ellen Gilbert married James Sharpe of Breedon by Banns on the 7th of April 1817 (witnesses were Elizabeth Gilbert and James Gilbert) at St. Mary's

Ann Gilbert married Daniel Hutchinson of Stretton en le Field by Banns on the 1st of March 1832 at St. Mary's

Anne Gilbert b.1787, was buried in St. Mary's graveyard on the 31st of March 1835.

Martha Gilbert married Benjamin Holloway of Osgathorpe by Banns at St. Mary's on the 19th of June 1837

Anne Elizabeth Gilbert, an infant, was buried in St. Mary's graveyard on the 18th June 1858.

Continued over page

THOMAS AND ANN GILBERT (NEE.WOODCOCK)

We now move forward to a Thomas Gilbert who was baptised at St. Mary's church, Osgathorpe on the 5th of February 1773, and registered as the son of Samuel and Elizabeth Gilbert. On the 8th of September 1795 at the age of 22, he married Ann Woodcock (aged 20) by Banns at St. Mary's Church, Osgathorpe. Witnesses were William Woodcock and Susanna Woodcock. Thomas died on the 3rd of September 1853 aged 80 and his wife Ann died on October 3rd, 1852, aged 77. They are buried together in St. Mary's church graveyard. The photograph of the gravestone which had been re-located from the original grave at some point, features the old Rectory and Alms-houses in the background. **Only 2 Gilbert gravestones remain in St. Mary's graveyard, Osgathorpe, this one and the other shown on page 10.**



THE SWITZERLAND SLATE INSCRIBED GRAVESTONE OF THOMAS AND ANN GILBERT

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY OF
THOMAS GILBERT
WHO DIED 3RD SEPTEMBER 1853
AGED 80 YEARS
ANN WIFE OF THE ABOVE
WHO DIED OCTOBER 3RD 1852
AGED 77 YEARS

Thomas and Ann had the following children: - Eleanor (baptised 22 Jan 1796), Elizabeth (baptised 23 Apr 1798), Ann (bap 18 Aug 1799), Thomas (bap 16 Jun 1805), Martha (bap 23 Apr 1809), Samuel (bap 7 Feb 1812). There is a conflict of 3 years here with the 1841 census which puts Samuel's age as 25. The parish baptism register records three sons - James, Josiah and William all being baptised on the same date of the 14th of Aug 1818. Were James, Josiah and William triplets? This was not the case, meaning James and Josiah hadn't been baptised until William came along, which gave Thomas and Ann the opportunity to baptise them all together. James married Sarah Morley at Kegworth on the 25th of December 1837. **William features later in the publication.** Thomas and Ann appeared to have had another daughter Mary, who died as an infant and was buried in St. Mary's graveyard on the 1st of February 1822. Thomas and Ann had at least 10 children.

The author suggests that the Thomas Gilbert named in the following document transcribed from the "Luddite Bicentenary" website dated Monday 5th December 1811 would have been the Thomas Gilbert referred to above.

On Thursday the 5th of December, framework-knitters in Leicestershire received visits from Luddites soliciting contributions for the cause.

William Brown Junior of Osgathorpe was making his way through the village near to the home of a Joseph Woodcock when a fellow framework-knitter Thomas Maton Harris beckoned him inside to meet three strangers. Harris explained that he wanted Brown to gather together the head stockings and bring them back to Woodcock's house, with a veiled threat that if he did not he "would be worse for it."

Brown collected his father, William Brown Senior, as well as William Hardy and William Davenport Senior and headed back to Woodcock's house for 5 p.m. to find others from the neighbourhood gathered there, including a Hosier, Thomas Gilbert. When there, Thomas Maton Harris took the three men into the parlour and presented them with a letter from Ned Lud, which read:

"Gentleman all — Ned Lud's compliments unto you and hope you will give a trifle towards supporting his army as he well understands the act of breaking up not just frames: if you comply with this it will be well, if not, I shall call upon you myself. Edward Lud".

Hardy had no money on him, and had to borrow a shilling from Maton Harris, contributing sixpence. Davenport had a number of frames in his workshop, and fearing they would be broken by Ned Lud's army if he refused contributed 1 shilling sixpence for himself and another shilling for his son. William Brown Senior gave 2 shillings. Hardy noticed that in total, 7 shillings and 6 pence had been laid upon the table by those present. Maton Harris asked Gilbert if he would like to contribute as well, but Gilbert said nothing and promptly left the house.

Hardy returned home and never saw the 3 strangers again. Gilbert however, returned later to Woodcock's house to find Maton Harris still present. Maton Harris told him 'in an apparent friendly way' that his frames, along with those of Messrs Johnson were to be broken by the Luddites.

This account has been compiled from the depositions of witnesses and accused which can be found at HO 42/119. It's not clear what had caused the statements to be taken, nor what happened to the threats levelled at Thomas Gilbert & Messrs Johnson.

More about the important local framework knitting industry is featured in a publication on the author's entitled "A History of Woollen Framework Knitting based on NW Leicestershire". This appears under subsection 'Other Industries'.

The 1841 census for Osgathorpe records Thomas Gilbert as a grocer, aged 65, still married to Ann, aged, 60. Three of their children – Samuel (25), William (20) a blacksmith, are living with them. They employed a servant, Elizabeth Massey? (50), suggesting they were reasonably well off.

In the 1851 Osgathorpe census, Thomas (78), is recorded as **a retired cordwainer** (boot and shoemaker)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION ON CORDWAINERS IN OSGATHORPE

*With hammer, knife, and flippers;
I thumb away, and cut, and tug,
At boot, and shoe, and slippers.
And if I can make both ends meet
My awl, though no great treasure
My work, though trodden under feet,
I'll work for you with pleasure."*

From Little Jack of all trades (London, 1823).

	1841 CENSUS	1851 CENSUS	1861 CENSUS	1871 CENSUS	1881 CENSUS	1891 CENSUS	1901 CENSUS	1911 CENSUS
SHOE, BOOT MAKER / CORDWAINER /	1	1	3	4	1	2	2	0
JUNIOR SHOE MAKER	1	0	0	0	0	0		
APPRENTICE SHOE MAKER / CORDWAINER	1	1	1	3	1	0		

The above chart lists the number of Cordwainers / Shoe and Boot makers in Osgathorpe recorded in the 1841 to 1901 censuses. These have been confirmed in trade directories also. **More comprehensive details can be found on the author's website under the subsection 'Other Industries'.**

These local cordwainers would have seen little in the way of profit from their enterprises even though a pair of shoes would probably have cost the buyer at least a weeks' wages. They would have run other businesses in parallel like shop keeping, Baking, Public House landlords, farming, blacksmithing etc., to subsidise their wages.

It is thought that the term cordwainer entered the English language originally from the Anglo-Norman cordwaner, in turn developed from old French cordoanier / cordouanier / corduennier etc.

It apparently initially denoted a worker in cordwain or cordovan, which was a leather historically produced in Moorish Córdoba, Spain in the Middle Ages.

The descriptions Cordwainer, or boot and shoemaker was used in the census description and generally they were all male. However, instances of wives are recorded as boot binders, who obviously carried out sewing and binding operations.

British tradition distinguishes the terms cordwainer and cobbler, restricting cobblers to repairing shoes. In this usage, **a cordwainer is someone who makes new shoes using new leather, whereas a cobbler is someone who repairs shoes.**

It is an ancient trade and the first English guild who called themselves cordwainers was founded at Oxford in 1131. "Cordwainers" was also the choice of the London shoemakers, who organized a guild before 1160, and the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers has used this title since receiving its first Ordinances in 1272.

In the British guild system, a cordwainer was distinguished from a cobbler because the guild tradition restricted the cobbler to repairing shoes. In fact, the cordwainers and cobblers had separate guilds.

Medieval cordwainers used cordovan leather for the highest-quality shoes, and these were located usually in the big cities, mainly London. Rural village cordwainers would have mainly used domestically produced leathers in the manufacture of boots and shoes for local villagers. The wealthier in Osgathorpe village society would no doubt have visited the cities for their high quality designer shoes.

Apparently, it wasn't until the 1520s that heels were introduced, but it is hard to imagine that it was another 250 years before separate left and right shoes were produced. The early 1800s saw the introduction of rivets, and piecework was introduced for the larger manufacturers. In the towns and cities, several shoemakers often worked together and many of them employed outworkers. Shoemaker's wives, as described by census enumerators, were often shoemakers' in their own right.

By the mid-1800s, iron lasts were invented and machines were introduced which posed a threat to the rural shoemakers' livelihoods.



THE MAKING OF BOOTS AND SHOES ON VARIOUS SIZED METAL LASTS

THOMAS & ANN GILBERT'S FIRST SON THOMAS

Thomas Gilbert, the first son and 4th child born to Thomas and Ann Gilbert in 1805 (see preceding information) was baptised at St. Mary's church Osgathorpe on the 16th of June 1805. He was a younger brother of William, the Osgathorpe blacksmith and village constable featured later. In the 1841 Osgathorpe census, Thomas (35) is recorded as being married to Harriet (35) and is a shoemaker / cordwainer. They have a son James (8), another son Thomas (3), and a daughter Helen (1), all given as being born in Leicestershire. It is thought that John Knight Gilbert b.1831 who was buried in St. Mary's graveyard on the 14th of January 1834 was their son. Sarah Gilbert (an infant) who was buried in St. Mary's graveyard on the 19th of February 1837 was thought to be their daughter also.

They also have living with them a junior shoe maker and an apprentice shoemaker Henry ? and Joseph Harrison. This suggests they have a substantial business. They were only living two doors away from Thomas's father and mother at this time.

In the 1851 census, Thomas is still recorded as being a cordwainer but is now combining this with being a farmer of 27 acres. All their children listed above are living with Thomas and Harriet, but they now have another son, Frederick, aged 9. Another daughter, Mary Ann (aged 15) is listed, although she wasn't recorded in the 1841 census. An apprentice cordwainer William Goodman (20), born in Knight Thorpe, Loughborough, is living with them. William Goodman and his family became one of the prominent Osgathorpe families whom the author has written extensively about on his website.

The 1851 and 1861 censuses record all the children being born in Osgathorpe but none of them are recorded as being baptised in the Osgathorpe parish register. There is no mention in the parish register either of Thomas marrying Harriet, who is recorded in different censuses as being born in Newbold or Osgathorpe. A bit of a mystery really!

By 1861, Thomas, aged 56 had become a successful farmer of 98 acres employing 3 men and 2 boys, in Osgathorpe, but there is no mention of him being a cordwainer still, so presumably he was now making sufficient money from farming. He is living with his wife Harriet (57) and their children Mary Ann (35), Thomas (23), Helen (21) and Frederick (19). Their first son James married to Lucy Ann sometime between 1851 and 1861. There is no mention of the family in the 1871 Osgathorpe census, including James and his wife Lucy Ann so presumably they were all living elsewhere (see overpage for details of James and Lucy ann.

There are no burial records for Thomas and Harriet in the Osgathorpe burial parish records.

JAMES GILBERT – THE YOUNGEST SON OF THOMAS AND HARRIET

James Gilbert was the first child born in 1833 to Thomas and Harriet Gilbert who feature on the previous page also. James is still living at home with his parents in 1851. However, by the 1861 census he has left home. He married Lucy Ann who was born in Ashby in 1858 at some point.

In the 1881 census, James Gilbert (aged 48) is back in Osgathorpe as a farmer of 30 acres living with a son Thomas aged 11, born in Uttoxeter. He is recorded as being a widower which cannot be correct (see below)

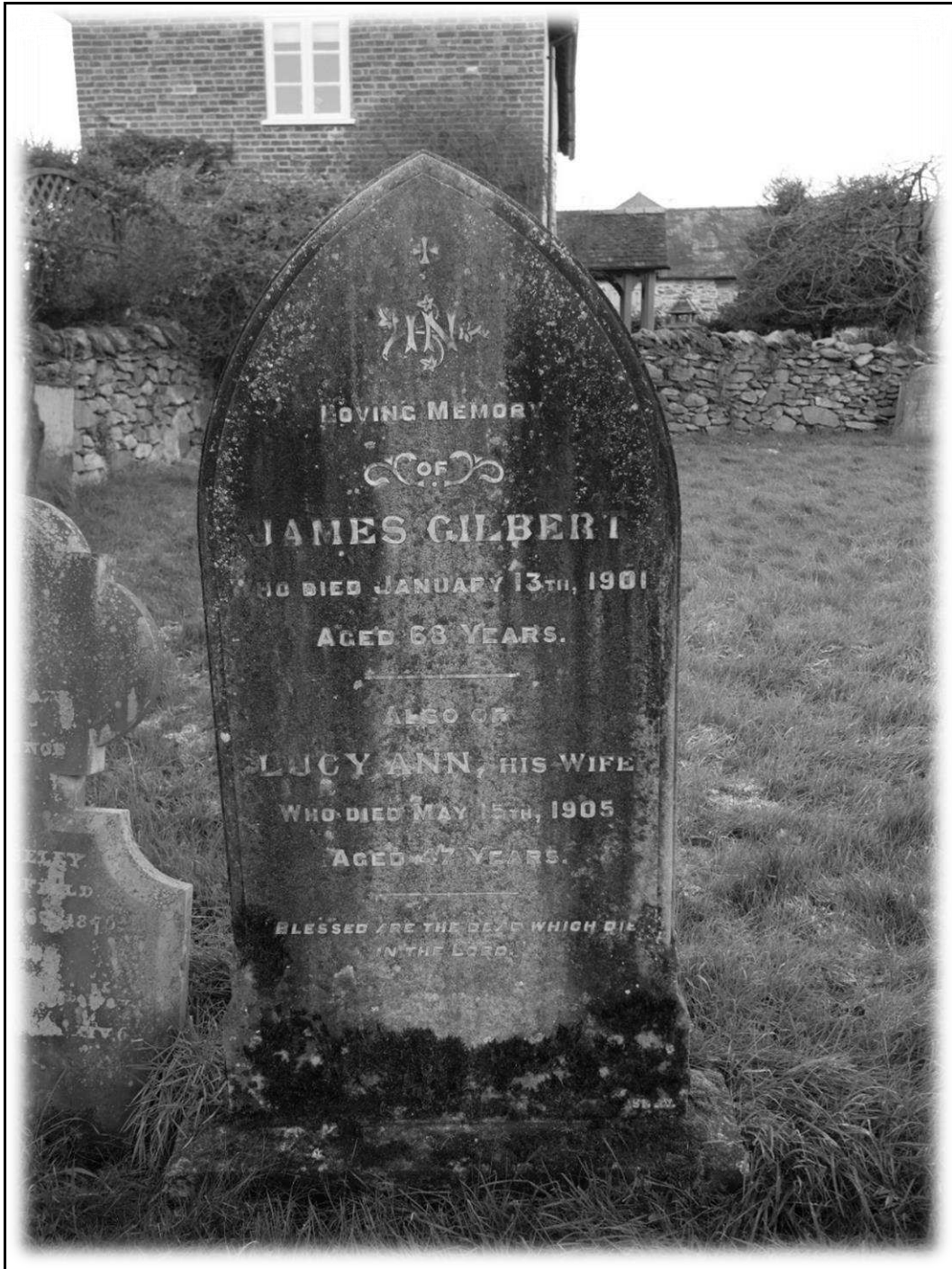
10 years later In the 1891 Osgathorpe census, James Gilbert is listed as a roadman labourer aged 58, living with his wife Lucy Ann aged 33, and a daughter Lilian aged 5 who was born in Holwell, Leicestershire.

As we can see from the following photograph of their gravestone, James had died in January 1901, just prior to the 1901 census being taken. Lucy Ann is now recorded in the 1901 census as a widow, aged 45 (actually aged 43), living with daughter Lilian, now aged 15.

Lucy Ann died in 1905, aged 47.

Only two Gilbert's graves remain in St. Mary's graveyard, Osgathorpe. They are those for Thomas Gilbert senior and his wife Ann shown on page 4 and the one shown on the next page for his grandson James, the first son of Thomas Gilbert junior and his wife Harriet.

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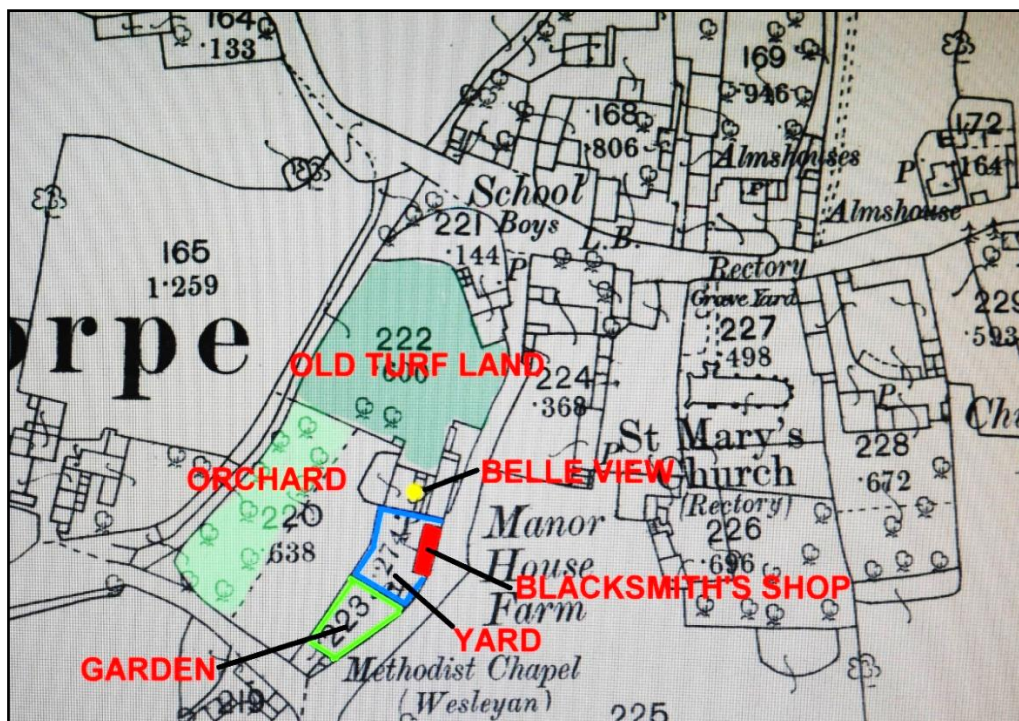


IN
LOVING MEMORY
OF
JAMES GILBERT
WHO DIED JANUARY 13TH 1901
AGED 68
ALSO, OF
LUCY ANN, HIS WIFE
WHO DIED MAY 15TH 1905
AGED 47 YEARS
BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD

WILLIAM GILBERT – ELDEST SON OF THOMAS AND ANN

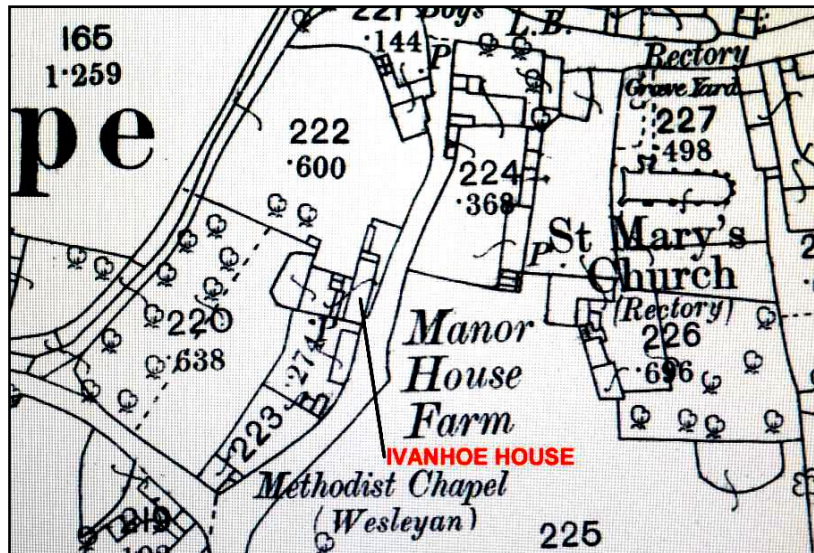
The 1851 Osgathorpe census records that living with Thomas and Ann Gilbert are their son William aged 32 (33 – baptised 18th August 1818), a master blacksmith, now married to Jane Barsby, aged 28, who was born in Rothley in 1823, and they have a daughter Sarah Ann, aged 2 and a son James, aged 7 months.

By the 1861 census, there is no mention of Thomas and Ann Gilbert, as they had died in 1853 and 1852 respectively (see the preceding gravestone details). Their son William (now a master blacksmith) and his wife Jane now have their own property in Osgathorpe and a blacksmith's forge, on Chapel Lane, and they had two further children, Mary Ann (8), a scholar and Elizabeth (11m). The following map shows the location of William's Blacksmiths shop and forge. It seems that they resided at the adjacent property formerly known as Belle View. When the barn / blacksmith's shop went up for sale in 2000, the forge apparently still stood in the NE corner of the building.



The location of a William Gilbert's former Blacksmith Shop & Forge shown on the 1883 issued 25 inch O/S map.

The most well-known & successful cordwainer (boot and shoemaker) in Osgathorpe was William Goodman. The enumerator for the 1891 census records their residence as "Ivanhoe House" situated on Chapel Lane (see the map below). The map below shows the actual location of Ivanhoe House on Chapel Lane in 1883, formerly known as Village Street. This was back-to-back with William Gilbert's property Belle View. [With their workshops being adjacent to each other it must have been very noisy in that area of Chapel Lane with both men hammering away in their respective trades.](#)



William Gilbert was one of two long serving master blacksmiths in Osgathorpe, out of a total of 6 identified, the other being Joseph Billings. A feature entitled "An overview of Osgathorpe's Blacksmiths in Chronological Order", appears later'

By the 1871 census, William is still shown as living at the same property, **but he is now recorded as a widower** and living with his children Mary A (18), Elizabeth (10), William (8), Josiah (5, baptised at St. Marys Church, Osgathorpe 10th May 1866)), Thomas (2), and Lucy (1). Sarah Ann and James, who were William and Jane's first two children, had left home at this time, Sarah Ann had married and was living just down the road, and James, now 21, was living with his uncle, a grocer and grazier, on Long Street, Belton, where James was the grocer's apprentice. By 1881, James had risen to the position of assistant grocer at his uncle's grocery shop in Belton. William Gilbert and Jane (nee. Barsby) had 6 children together. Sadly, Jane died in 1866 at the age of 44 and was buried in St. Mary's Church graveyard on the 20th of March 1866. **William, at the age of 48, now a blacksmith and farmer, had married his second wife Elizabeth Hodgkinson (32), born in Osgathorpe, on 18 Aug 1868 by banns at St. Mary's church, Osgathorpe. Her father was Thomas Hodgkinson (a malster) and witnesses were William Mason Brooks and Harriet Henson. Strangely she is not recorded with the family in the 1871 census.** However, according to Osgathorpe baptism records, they had two children together, they were Thomas and Lucy recorded above living with their father. It appears that Thomas was born out of wedlock as parish records show that he was baptised on the 22nd of November 1868 at St. Mary's, Osgathorpe. Lucy was baptised there on the 14th of August 1870.

Moving forward to the 1881 census, we can see that William Gilbert, now 62, is living in the same property, and still recorded as a widower and a blacksmith and there is still no mention of his second wife Elizabeth (nee. Hodgkinson), and his daughter Elizabeth seems to have taken on the role of housekeeper. The following children are recorded – Elizabeth (20), **housekeeper**; William A (17), railway clerk; Josiah (15), scholar; Thomas (12), scholar; Lucy (11), scholar. As William and his first wife Jane's daughter Elizabeth (20) is recorded as a housekeeper, the question remains, what has happened to William's second wife Elizabeth. There is no record in the parish burial registers of her dying and being buried at Osgathorpe.

By 1891 Josiah, the 6th son of William and Jane Barsby was living with his younger brother James, his wife Harriet and their 4-month-old daughter, Harriet Ethel – on Long Street, Belton, where James was a grocer and baker, and Josiah was his older brother's assistant.

In the 1891 census there is still no mention of William's second wife, and he is recorded again as a widower (72) and a retired blacksmith, still residing in the same property. Living with him are William A (27) still a railway clerk and Thomas (22) a cattle dealer. In the 1901 census there is no further mention of William Gilbert.

The author has concluded that William's second wife Elizabeth died during the birth of their second child Lucy.

WILLIAM GILBERT - BLACKSMITH AND OSGATHORPE PARISH CONSTABLE

Research into Osgathorpe Parish Overseers and Constables records revealed that the above William Gilbert was appointed Parish Constable in the following years – 1860, 1861, 1864, 1869, and 1872. Together with his Blacksmithing businesses, William would have been a busy individual. His brother's Thomas (1857) and James (1879 / 1881) were also appointed village overseers.

The position of "Parish Constable", also referred to as a "Petty Constable" originated from the manorial courts and later became a fixture of the parish structure following the demise of the manorial system of governance. The constable was voted in by the parish ratepayers from amongst fellow ratepayers under the auspices of the parish vestry. Although by the early 17th century, the manor court had ceased to exercise control over the appointment of the constable, it was not until The Parish Constables Act of 1842 that the powers were formally and officially transferred to the parish and the local magistrates.

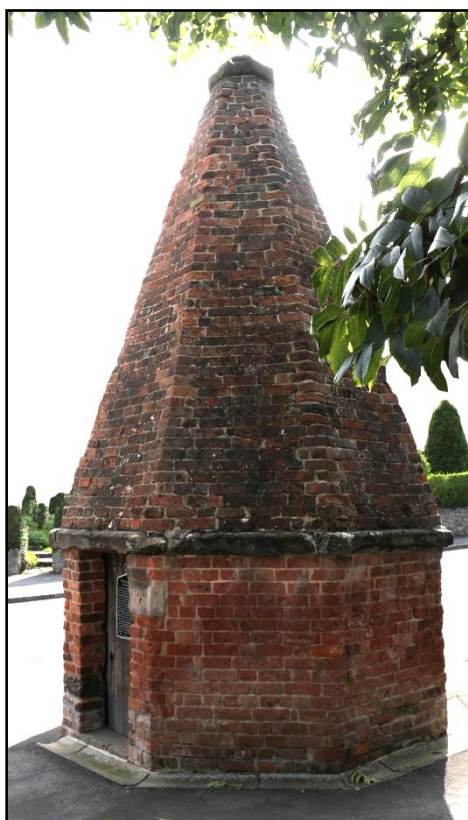
Like many official positions at the time, the position was obligatory, and unpaid, although the chosen constable had the right to employ someone to perform the role on their behalf. It was often a resented burden, as it involved a wide variety of extremely time consuming tasks

Vagabonds and beggars could be a drain on parish resources, under the Elizabethan Poor Law. They could also be a potential source of crime. Constables were expected to implement the Vagabonds and Beggars Act 1494, under which vagabonds and beggars were to be set in the stocks for three days, and then whipped until they leave the parish. The constable also had general responsibility for the local stocks, as well as for the pillory, and was expected to punish poachers, drunks, hedge-damagers, prostitutes, church-avoiders, and fathers of bastards. Parish constables were expected to monitor trading standards and pubs, catch rats, restrain loose animals, light signal beacons, provide local lodging and transport for the military, perform building control, attend inquests, and collect the parish rates. They were also responsible for collecting national taxes, within their area. The Petty Constable operated at the parish level serving a one-year unpaid term. The duties were varied and included the collection of taxes and rates, arresting suspects, catching escaped prisoners, dealing with church non-attendance, evicting vagrants from the parish, compiling juror lists, overseeing the parish militia and many others. Much of his work was written up in the constable accounts which were kept in the parish chest.

In the late 18th and early 19th century, village “lock ups”, also known as round houses, cages, watch houses, blind houses and clinks were temporary holding places for petty criminals. They were built in certain villages only for some reason and there is no evidence of one existing in Osgathorpe, Griffydam, Swannington or Coleorton. Around 200 were reputedly built around the country, and evidence of these remain in local villages at Worthington, Breedon, Packington, Smisby and Ticknall.

They were used in small communities before Police Stations with cells brought about by the 1839 police act became commonplace.

These small and often quirky-shaped buildings were frequently used by the parish constables to house local drunks, vagrants and minor law breakers before they were taken and hauled up in front of the local magistrate. All of the above villages had an ample supply of pubs so there were always plenty of drunks to lock up.



Worthington



Smisby

Examples of octagonal shaped lock ups / round houses of red brick with an octagonal brick spire

The development of county police forces began with the 1839 County Police Act and from 1856 all counties and many boroughs were obliged to establish a police force. As county police forces were developed during the 19th century so the role of the parish constable became redundant. There were two Constable posts, one was the High Constable and the other the Petty Constable. The High Constable’s jurisdiction covered the entire administrative area known as the “Hundred” and acted as the assistant to the county Lieutenant. He had a special responsibility for raising the muster when ordered by the Crown.

Constables and Overseers were appointed for the division at "Special Court Petty Sessions" held at Ashby de la Zouch at the beginning of April every year. The constables elected by the parish served an unpaid "part time" one year term, although their duties suggest it was much more than part time.

The following newspaper articles featuring William Gilbert as the village constable portray what a dangerous occupation this was in those times.

**Transcribed from the Leicester Journal – October 7th, 1864
Ashby de la Zouch Police Court
Murderous Assault at Osgathorpe**

*At the Police Court on the 29th September, before W. W. Abney and H. E. Smith, Esqrs., Benjamin Platts, of Griffydam (a man well known to the police), Jesse Hodges, of Pegg's Green, and Aaron Stewart (no doubt a relative of the author), of Coleorton, were charged by Wm. Gilbert, parish constable of Osgathorpe, with assaulting him whilst in the execution of his duty, on the night of the 24th instant. It appeared from the evidence of Gilbert, that he was sent for by Mr. Rennocks, landlord of the Royal Oak, to quell a disturbance and fight which had arisen there, Stewart being the ring leader. This he did at the time; but it being the wake, there were many people assembled in the village drinking, amongst whom were the prisoners, companion's of Stewart, who immediately sent for the "Griffydam lot", who were at another public house drinking. They immediately repaired to the scene of action, and declared that Stewart should fight in the defence of everyone. Gilbert again attempted to interfere, and drew his staff. The three prisoners, with others not yet in custody, immediately seized him and dragged him out into the street, and while Platts took his staff and held him, the other prisoners brutally beat him about the head and face, kicking him also on other parts of his body, when he was rescued by his brother constable and others, who at once sent to Whitwick for the police. They were soon on the spot, but the prisoners had been decamped, after in vain attempting to gain entrance into Rennock's house, where Gilbert had been taken. A warrant was immediately issued for their apprehension, which was placed in the hands of P.S. Peberdy, who succeeded in apprehending Platts at his house. P.C. Challoner captured Hodges, and P.C. Smith after some difficulty, descended No.2. Swannington Pit on Monday evening last and captured Stewart whilst at work. He was much surprised at the officer's intrusion. – **The prisoners were all committed to trial at the next quarter session.***

THE TRIAL

**Leicester Chronicle October 22nd 1864
ASSAULT AT OSGATHORPE WAKE.**

Benjamin Platts (34), miner, Jesse Hodges (24), miner, and Aaron Stewart (on bail) were indicted for unlawfully assaulting and beating Wm. Gilbert, parish constable, in the execution of his duty at Osgathorpe, on the 24th September last. — Mr. Palmer prosecuted; Mr. Merewether defended Hodges and Mr. Bennett defended Platts; Stewart was defended by Mr. Inglesant.

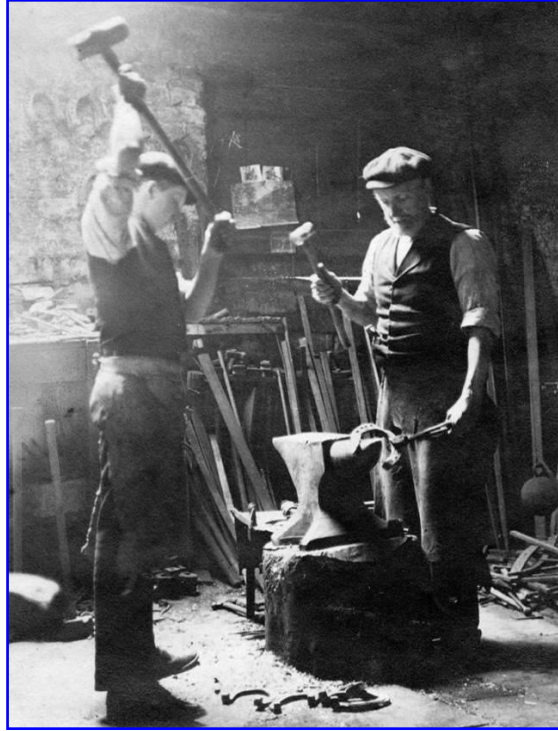
Wm. Gilbert deposed that he was parish constable at Osgathorpe last September. On the 24th of that month, at night, he was summoned to the Royal Oak by Mr. Rennocks, to stop a fight that was going on. It was the wake at Osgathorpe. Went to the dancing room, where, amongst others, was Aaron Stewart, who was fighting with Samuel Rowe. Told Stewart he must not fight now he (the parish constable) had come. Rowe knew him quite well. Directly after that,

he saw Hodges in the dancing room. He came up to him, put his fists on his neck, and kept shoving him about. At the request of the landlord witness stopped the dancing, and took Hodges to the door, and asked him to go away quietly, and he did so. Afterwards, several persons came to the house, amongst whom were the three prisoners. At that time Rowe was drinking, and Stewart was pushed upon Rowe, and that caused Rowe and Stewart to fight. Witness tried to separate them, when Platts struck him on both cheeks. Afterwards, he was again going to separate the combatants, and drew his staff to protect himself, when Platts laid hold of it and asked what he was going to do with that stick. After some difficulty he got up to Stewart and Rowe, and laid hold of the latter. Platts still kept hold of his staff, and he (witness) ultimately made his escape from the house, receiving in his exit a number of blows from various people. He saw Hodges strike him. Platts was pulling at the staff all the time. His clothes were torn. Witness was also taken to a wall and thrown across it by Platts among others. He was much kicked about the legs; his eyes were cut in three places, and his coat and waistcoat were running down with blood. In consequence of the injuries he had received he was unable to attend to his business for a week. Afterwards he sent information to the police at Whitwick. He could speak with confidence to the three prisoners. — Wm. Wardle, another parish constable of Osgathorpe, said on the night of the 24th Sept. he saw Aaron Stewart and Hodges "pitching into" Gilbert, who was kneeling on the ground outside the public house, and Platts trying to take his staff from him. Blood was streaming from Gilbert's face. — By Mr. Merewether: Lifted Gilbert up and took him into the house. Did not use his staff, because he was not struck. Did not keep the people back from Gilbert: he could not do so when he was assisting him into the house. Besides, he did not want his brains knocking out. He knew the men he had to deal with, and had "his son to take care on." — Samuel Rowe and William Rennocks, son of the landlord of the Royal Oak, gave evidence to a similar effect. — Mr. Bennett, Mr. Merewether, and Mr. Inglesant having each addressed the court on behalf of their respective clients, commenting on the discrepancy of the evidence, and submitting that from the confusion which was rampant at the public house on the night of the alleged assault, and the probable state of the witnesses on the occasion, the evidence on behalf of the prosecution could not be relied upon. — Several witnesses were called to character on behalf of Hodges and Stewart. — The Chairman summed up the evidence, and the jury found Platts guilty; Hodges guilty, with a recommendation to mercy on account of his good character; and Stewart not guilty. — **Platts was sentenced to four months and Hodges to twenty-one days hard labour.**



**THE FORMER ROYAL OAK PUBLIC HOUSE, MAIN STREET, OSGATHORPE,
WHERE THE FRACAS TOOK PLACE**

AN OVERVIEW OF OSGATHORPE'S BLACKSMITHS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER



A FARRIER FORGING A HORSESHOE

In simple terms a Blacksmith is a *craftsman who fabricates objects out of iron by hot and cold forging on an anvil*. Blacksmiths who 'specialised' in the forging of shoes for horses were called farriers.

The blacksmith's essential equipment consists of a forge, or furnace, in which smelted iron is heated so that it can be worked easily; an anvil, a heavy, firmly secured, steel-surfaced block upon which the piece of iron is worked; tongs to hold the iron on the anvil; and hammers, chisels, and other implements to cut, shape, flatten, or weld the iron into the desired object. *See the front cover photograph.*

Blacksmiths made an immense variety of common objects used in everyday life: nails, screws, bolts, and other fasteners; sickles, ploughshares, axes, and other agricultural implements; hammers and other tools used by artisans; candlesticks and other household objects; swords, shields, and armour; wheel rims and other metal parts in wagons and carriages; fireplace fittings and implements; spikes, chains, and cables used on ships; and the ironwork, both functional and decorative, used in furniture and in the building trades.

The blacksmith's most frequent occupation, however, was farriery. In horseshoeing, the blacksmith first cleans and shapes the sole and rim of the horse's hoof with rasps and knives, a process painless to the animal owing to the tough, horny, and nerveless character of the hoof. He then selects a U-shaped iron shoe of appropriate size from his stock and, heating it red-hot in a forge, modifies its shape to fit the hoof, cools it by quenching it in water, and affixes it to the hoof with nails.

Most towns and villages had a blacksmith's shop where horses were shod and tools, farm implements, and wagons and carriages were repaired. The ubiquity of the profession can be inferred, in the English-speaking world, from the prevalence of the surname "Smith." Blacksmiths also came to be general-purpose repairers of farm equipment and other machinery in the 19th century. By then, however, blacksmithing was already on the decline, as more and more metal articles formerly made by hand were shaped in factories by machines or made by inexpensive casting processes. In the industrialised world, even the blacksmith's mainstay, farriery, greatly declined with the disappearance of horses from use in agriculture and transport.

The Village Blacksmith

[Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#) 1807-1882

Under a spreading chestnut-tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands,
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.

His hair is crisp, and black, and long;
His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man.

Week in, week out, from morn till night,
You can hear his bellows blow;
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow,
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,
When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,
And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter's voice
Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice
Singing in Paradise!
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;

And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling,—rejoicing,—sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught!
Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought.

Osgathorpe had several Blacksmith's and Blacksmith's Shops in various locations in the village, as most outlying villages like Griffydam, Pegg's Green, Worthington, Swannington and Coleorton did. However, Osgathorpe seemed to have had more than most, presumably due to the intensity of farming which took place here that required repairs to machinery, waggons and horse shoeing etc. Blacksmiths usually combined farming with blacksmithing in order to supplement their income.

A comprehensive chart of Blacksmiths operating in Osgathorpe is appended. We unfortunately only have knowledge of where two of the blacksmith's shops were located with any certainty, these being William Gilbert's and Joseph Billings.

THOMAS CLARKE

The oldest record found of a Blacksmith living in Osgathorpe found by the author was Thomas Clarke. The Churchwarden's records show that he was supplying ironwork, *nailes* and fastenings from 1690 to 1712 for the church bell wheels and the church gate.

STEPHEN AND WILLIAM BAILEY

The next oldest record found for a Blacksmith in Osgathorpe was for William Bailey who is listed in an 1830 Poll record to elect two knights of the Shire. He was allowed to vote on the basis he owned property. By 1841, Ann Bailey, William's wife and then a widow, and her two sons William and Stephen are listed as Blacksmiths in the one household. In William White's trade directory of 1846, Stephen and William Bailey are now living together and recorded as Blacksmith's and Graziers. By 1851, William is given as a farmer of 36 acres and Stephen is living with him as the Blacksmith. Stephen is recorded in a trade directory as still being a Blacksmith in 1863, but had disappeared by the 1871 census.

STEPHEN DEAVILLE

Stephen Deaville a nephew of Stephen Bailey above who was born in Woodhouse Eaves, is listed as a Blacksmith in the 1861 and 1871 censuses, but in an 1876 trade directory he is just given as a farmer, and by the 1881 census had disappeared.

WILLIAM GILBERT

See earlier subsection on William Gilbert for details.

JOSEPH BILLINGS

Joseph Billings, who was born in Naseby, Northants, was a farmer / blacksmith / grazier in Osgathorpe for at least 40 years, being first recorded in the 1871 census as such and finally in the 1911 census as a blacksmith and grazier. In the 1911 census, Joseph (61) and his wife Ruth (60) who had been married for 40 years, are recorded as having had 14 children, two of whom had died. At this time, their two son's Henry and James are living with them and working at Cottage Farm where he lived and had his blacksmith's shop for at least 30 years.

See the following maps showing where both William Gilbert's and Joseph Billings's blacksmith shops were.

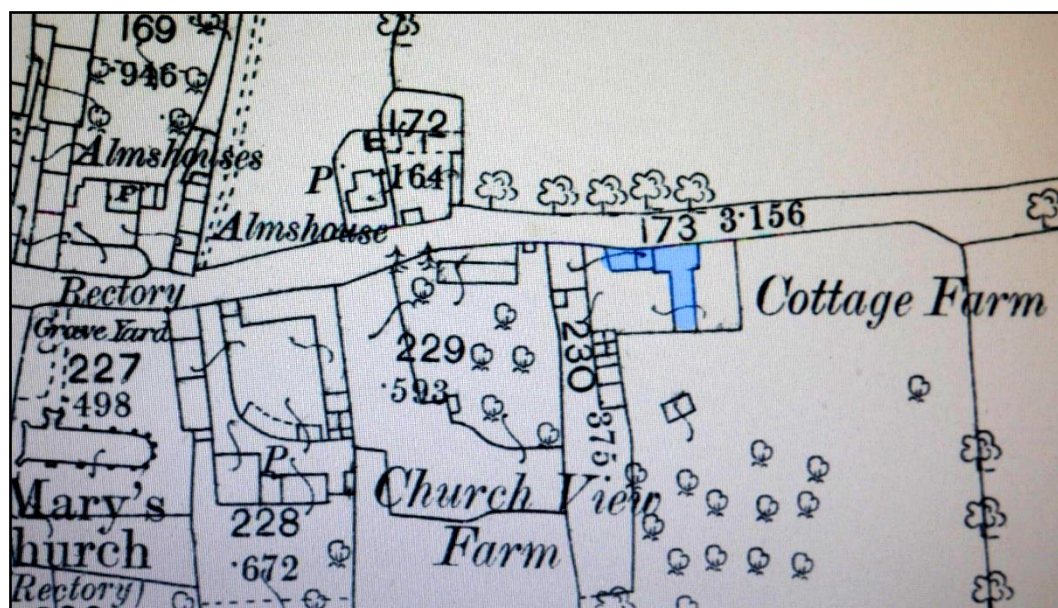
WILLIAM POPLEY DUNSMORE

The last record of a Blacksmith found in Osgathorpe was William Popley Dunsmore in the 1911 census and Kelly's 1912 trade directory. There was no record of a Blacksmith in the last Kelly's 1916 trade directory for the area.

TRADE DIRECTORY & CENSUS RECORDS

DATE	BLACKSMITH NAMES
TRADE DIRECTORY 1846	WILLIAM & STEPHEN BAILEY
	WILLIAM GILBERT
TRADE DIRECTORY 1854	WILLIAM & STEPHEN BAILEY
	WILLIAM GILBERT
TRADE DIRECTORY 1855	WILLIAM BAILEY
	WILLIAM GILBERT
TRADE DIRECTORY 1861	STEPHEN BAILEY
	WILLIAM GILBERT
TRADE DIRECTORY 1863	STEPHEN BAILEY
	WILLIAM GILBERT
TRADE DIRECTORY 1870	STEPHEN DEAVILLE
	WILLIAM GILBERT
TRADE DIRECTORY 1876	SAMUEL FARMER
	WILLIAM GILBERT
TRADE DIRECTORY 1891	JOSEPH BILLINGS
TRADE DIRECTORY 1908	NO BLACKSMITH GIVEN

TRADE DIRECTORY 1912	WILLIAM POPLEY DUNSMORE
TRADE DIRECTORY 1916	NO BLACKSMITH GIVEN
OSGATHORPE CENSUS 1841	ANN, WILLIAM & STEPHEN BAILEY, JOSEPH BROOKS (JUNIOR), GEORGE ADKIN (APPRENTICE)
	WILLIAM GILBERT
OSGATHORPE CENSUS 1851	WILLIAM GILBERT
	STEPHEN BAILEY
OSGATHORPE 1861 CENSUS	WILLIAM GILBERT (MASTER BLACKSMITH)
	STEPHEN BAILEY
	STEPHEN DEAVILLE (nephew of above and born in Woodhouse, Leics)
OSGATHORPE 1871 CENSUS	WILLIAM GILBERT, WILLIAM GADESBY, STEPHEN DEAVILLE
OSGATHORPE 1871/ 1881 /1901 / 1911 CENSUS	JOSEPH BILLINGS
OSGATHORPE 1911 CENSUS	WILLIAM POPLEY DUNSMORE



1883 issued 25 inch O/S map

Joseph Billings was both a farmer / grazier and master blacksmith in Osgathorpe for at least 40 years, first appearing in the 1871 census and finally in the 1911 census. He was Blacksmithing at Cottage Farm coloured blue, for at least 30 years.

**MARY JANE GILBERT (DAUGHTER OF WILLIAM GILBERT)
AND HER HUSBAND RICHARD HANDLEY VESTY**



GRAVE IN CASTLE DONINGTON CEMETARY

TRANSCRIBED GRAVE INSCRIPTION

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MARY JANE

THE BELOVED WIFE OF

R.H. VESTY, OF GRACEDIEU

FELL ASLEEP MAY 27 – 1904

AGED 50 YEARS

'THY WILL BE DONE'

RICHARD HANDLEY VESTY

WHO PASSED AWAY APRIL 7TH – 1937

AGED 79 YEARS

FOR EVER WITH THE LORD

ALSO, OF

MARY HANDLEY VESTY

WHO PASSED AWAY MARCH 28 – 1939

AGED 20 YEARS

'SWEET MEMORIES'

Continued over page

Richard Handley Vesty was born in Glen Parva, Leics in 1858, to Samuel Vesty (1813-1892) and his wife Eliza Jane. Samuel and Eliza were aged 46 and 33 respectively at the time of his birth.

Richard Handley Vesty is recorded later as being in Gracedieu and he married Mary Jane Gilbert (1854-1904) in January 1881 at St. Mary's Church, Osgathorpe. Mary Jane was the first daughter of William Gilbert (b.1819) and his wife Jane (nee. Barsby) (b.1823).

The preceding photograph of the grave of Richard Handley Vesty and his wife Mary Jane Vesty (nee. Gilbert) reveals that another person, Mary Handley Vesty is buried in the same grave, who died at the age of 20 in March 1939. One's immediate thought is that it is their daughter, however, as Mary Jane died in 1904, that is not possible of course.

Richard Handley Vesty appears to have been married again less than 2 yrs after the death of his first wife to a lady by the name of Lily Phronesia Webb (1881-1959): -

Lily Phronesia Webb was born on 27 January 1881, in Thringstone, Leicestershire, her father, Daniel Amos Webb, was 38 and her mother, Catherine Biddle, was 33. She married Richard Handley Vesty in January 1906, in Leicestershire. Records suggest that they had a daughter Edna Lilian Vesty in 1907 (1907-1996). Lily is then recorded as living in Belton in 1911, so, where is Richard Handley Vesty? Lily died on 20 October 1959, in Woodhouse Eaves, Leicestershire, England, United Kingdom, at the age of 78.

Records suggest that they had a daughter Edna Lilian Vesty born in 1907 who died in January 1996 in Loughborough.

So, we are left with the mystery of 'who was the Mary Handley Vesty on the gravestone'? Did Richard marry again, and was this his third wife? This seems to be the only plausible answer.

JOSIAH AND JAMES GILBERT – SONS OF WILLIAM GILBERT (THE OSGATHORPE BLACKSMITH)

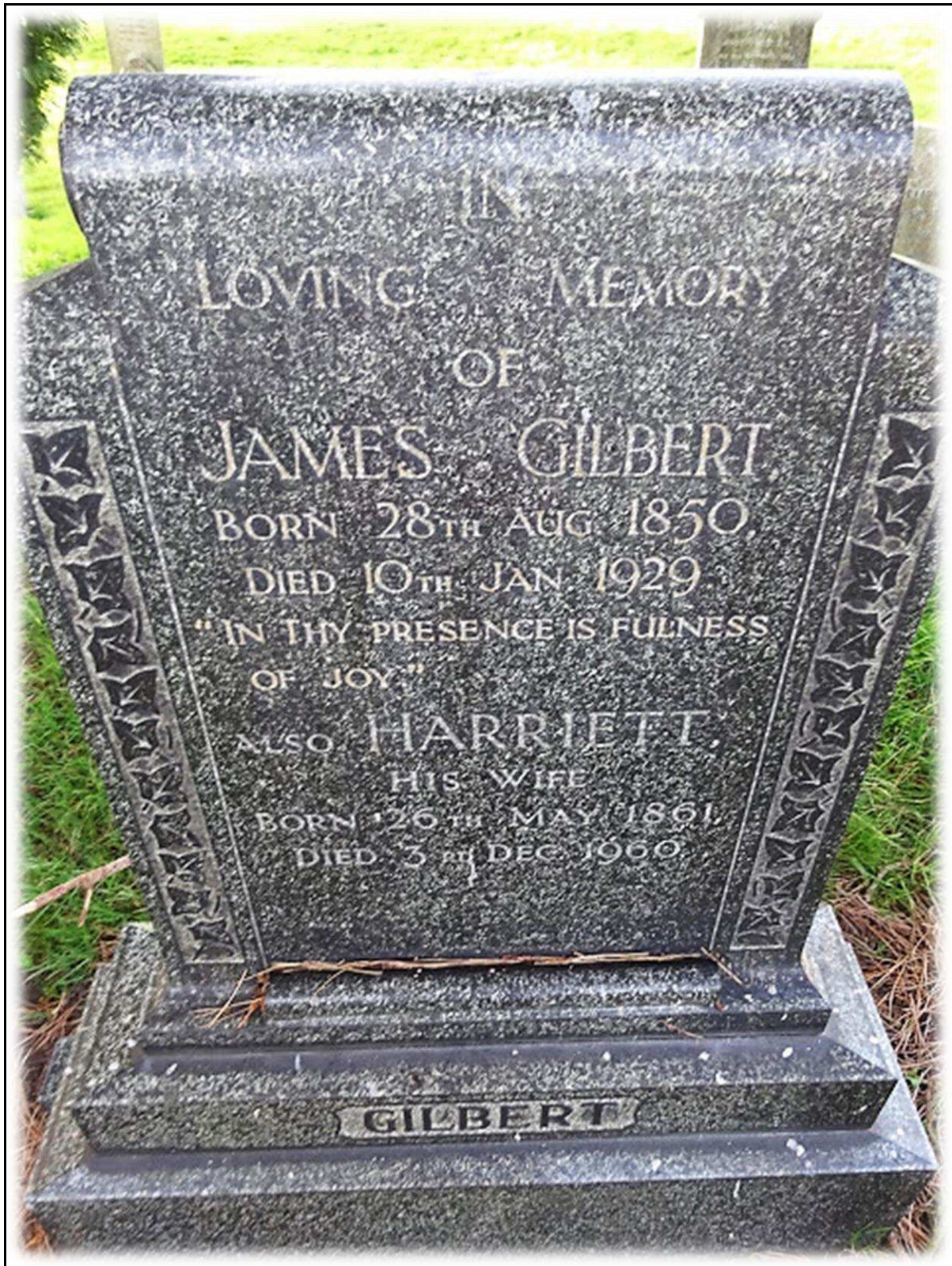
James Gilbert did not appear in the 1871 Osgathorpe census as he was now moved to 10 Long Street, Belton where he is living with his uncle and aunt, George and Emily Holloway, and their daughter Emma. George is a grocer and grazier, and James is working as an apprentice grocer. In 1881, James is still living with the Holloways and recorded as a grocer's assistant. James married Harriet Shaw in 1889. She was the daughter of a cordwainer from Belton and had been a pupil teacher at the local school.

By 1891, James's younger brother Josiah, aged 25, had moved from Osgathorpe to Belton and was now living with James and his wife Harriet on Long Street, Belton, and they now had a 4-month-old daughter Harriet Ethel. James was now a grocer and baker in his own right, and Josiah was still working as an assistant to his older brother. The Holloways and their two grown up daughters had now moved to another property in Belton and George was recorded as a grazier, leaving James with a substantial 7 room property. By 1901, James and Harriet had another daughter Gladys Elizabeth, and Josiah (35) was still working as an assistant to his older brother.

In 1901, Josiah Gilbert (35) married Sarah Newbold (30) who was born in Belton c.1871 and in the same year, they moved to a property in Main Street, Markfield where Sarah gave birth to a son William Handley Josiah Gilbert on 23rd February 1902. They ran their own grocery and bakery store; Josiah having had a good grounding in the business whilst working for his brother James in Belton. In 1911 the business is still in operation with Sarah acting as an assistant to her husband, and William is now a scholar at the local school.

In 1912/13 James owned two properties in Cumberland Road, Loughborough, as well as the property in Markfield. By 1914, he owns a property at 77, Empress Road, Loughborough which incorporates a corner grocery shop which he runs. Unfortunately, this all comes to an abrupt end when a German Zeppelin L20 airship heading to Liverpool, mistakenly released a number of bombs over Loughborough, one being in Empress Road where the point of impact was once defined by a cross set in the road. This proved to be catastrophic for the Gilberts as shrapnel from the bomb flew into their shop killing Josiah who apparently died in the arms of his son William.

Continued over page



JAMES AND HARRIET GILBERT'S GRAVE IN LOUGHBOROUGH CEMETERY



JOSIAH AND SARAH GILBERT'S GRAVE IN LOUGHBOROUGH CEMETERY