

Our Cawseys – An Unruly Nineteenth Century Barnstaple family.

The majority of this account is about the family of my great-great-grandparents, John and Prudence Cawsey. They settled in Barnstaple in about 1830, just as the lace factories were being set up drawing workers from the countryside to the new industry in Barnstaple. Almost all the many Cawseys in nineteenth century Barnstaple descended from John and Prudence. Their lives were turbulent, many becoming well-known to the magistrates. Their misdeeds were often reported in the local newspapers of the time – which now provide a wealth of colourful material for this account which gives little evidence of Victorian virtues in the Cawsey family!

Before beginning the story of the Cawseys in Barnstaple itself, the following introductory material covers the family background.

Though the name “Cawsey”, or variants, is found in other counties, many present-day Cawseys (this spelling) can trace their ancestry back to a very small area in North Devon. This area is roughly centred on the village of Atherington and covers Bideford and Torrington to the west, Barnstaple to the north, and South Molton to the east. In 1851 there were some 30 Cawsey households in this area, and few outside of it - though some migration had begun.

The Cawseys of Atherington

Our Cawsey family can be traced back to Atherington, a village south of Barnstaple, in the early 16th century. Walter Cawse or Causy, who was listed as a tax payer in the 1524 and 1544 Subsidy Rolls, seems likely to have been the father of James Cawsie who was born in about 1524. We know very little about the early generations, but there is evidence that they were quite prosperous yeomen. James Cawsie and most of those who followed, left wills, though no copies survive. A little more information emerges in the late 17th Century. Lewes (or Ludovic) Cawsey was recorded in the 1674 Hearth Tax record as having four hearths - presumably a large house, and perhaps the Chantry farmhouse at that time. Lewes was the great-grandson of James Cawsie. and died in 1696. The first definite association with Chantry is the reference to 'Roger Cawsey of Chantry' who died in 1706; perhaps he was a brother of Lewes - we just do not know. However the Land Tax Assessments show that Chantry Farm was certainly occupied by the descendants of Lewes Cawsey generally passing to the eldest sons - usually named Lewis (Lewes) or Robert. Other branches of the family moved north into Tawstock parish. The last of the Robert Cawsey's was farming Chantry until 1864, when he sold up. There is a memorial to this Robert and his wife Mary at Atherington, and another to his son John Cawsey who also farmed at Atherington. Chantry passed into other hands, and the Cawseys had long gone when a disastrous fire occurred at the Chantry farmhouse in 1922.

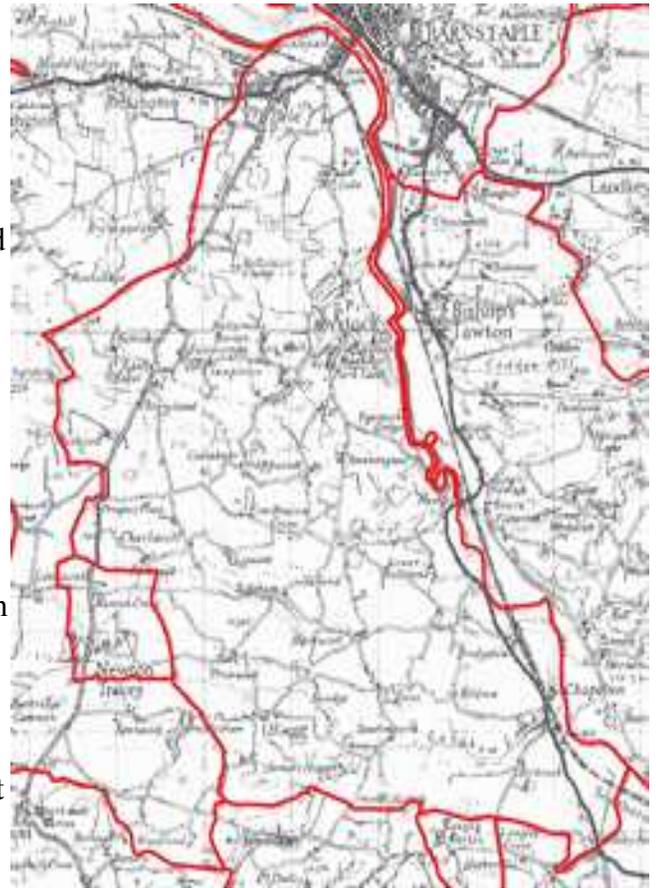


Fire at Chantry Farm; the Wills family, c. 1922.

The Cawseys of Tawstock

John Cawsey (b. 1702) was a grandson of Lewes Cawsey and at some time in his life he settled in the north part of Tawstock parish. He was certainly farming at Stickelpath by 1780 and maybe much earlier. Stickelpath farm was in the extreme north of Tawstock parish and the area is now part of Barnstaple. At the same time his son, John Cawsey (b. 1746) was farming close by at Herton. By 1789 they had both died. The younger John Cawsey left two sons, John and George, and our line descends from George.

A little later than this another John Cawsey, a cousin, son of the then Robert Cawsey of Chantry started farming at a small farm in Atherington (Little Weir), but after 10 years he acquired a larger farm in the hamlet of Hiscott, quite near to Chantry, but just across the parish boundary in the very south of Tawstock parish. His son Robert Somers Cawsey continued with the Hiscott farm. Over much of this period the second farm at Hiscott was occupied by John Cann. .



The aforementioned George Cawsey worked as a husbandman (one step up from an agricultural labourer, having a little land of his own). It seems likely that he lived his life in this same northern part of Tawstock parish where his grandfather had farmed. George Cawsey married Agnes Richards and they had two sons John and George and a daughter Elizabeth.

John married Prudence Cann, daughter of the Hiscott farmer, John Cann. Their story continues below. John's brother George married Elizabeth Abbot and remained in the north Tawstock area. He farmed at Rowden Thorn for a while before becoming a 'road contractor' living at Roundswell (1851). He then returned to farming having 34 acres at Eastcombe Village, and 50 acres at Stoneyland; both these farms are near St John's Chapel, west of Tawstock village. George and Elizabeth had four sons and three daughters. One of the sons was George who will appear twice more in this account.

[John and Prudence Cawsey - early days of their marriage](#)

We now begin the story of John and Prudence Cawsey. John Cawsey worked as a farm labourer in Tawstock and Fremington and married Prudence Cann at Pilton in 1823. Both were described as 'sojourners', A witness at the marriage was George Cawsey, probably John's brother. Only 2 weeks after the marriage, a daughter Elizabeth was baptised at Pilton; John was then said to be a 'carrier'.

John and Prudence soon fell upon hard times and in 1827 sought Poor-Law relief in Fremington; John Cawsey was subject to a 'Settlement Examination', a procedure which often led to the subject's removal from the Parish by order of the magistrates because he was not regarded as legally settled there. The Settlement Examination document is held in the North Devon Record Office. It reads as follows:

The Examination of John Cawsey, a Pauper, now resident in the Parish of Fremington in the County of Devon aforesaid, laborer, taken on oath before us whose names are hereunto subscribed, two of His majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said County, the 29th day of March 1827, touching his settlement.

Who on his oath saith that he has heard and verily believes he was born in the Parish of Fremington in the said County of Devon, that his parents were legally settled inhabitants of the Parish of Tawstock in the said County - That examinant on Lady Day about 8 years ago hired himself to William Long of Tawstock, yeoman, to serve him for the term of one year from that time to the Lady Day following and entered into such service in the Parish of Tawstock aforesaid and received his wages for the same - That Examinant at Lady about 6 years ago hired himself to William Kidwell of Fremington aforesaid for the term of one year from that time to the Lady day following and entered into such service in the Parish of Fremington aforesaid and served such year in the said Parish except 5 days before Lady Day when he was absent with the leave of his Master.

Examinant the day after Lady Day returned and made up for the 5 days he was absent when his Master paid him his whole years wages. That examinant about 4 years and a half ago was duly married in the Parish church of Pilton to Prudence his present wife by whom he has two children, namely 3 years and a half and George one year and six months.

John Cawsey's statement that he was born in Fremington was probably insufficient, but an unmarried man could obtain settlement by being hired to work for a settled inhabitant for a complete year, hence the importance of his hiring by William Kidwell of Fremington, and the making up of the 5 days absence - all prior to his marriage. This should have earned him settlement in Fremington (replacing settlement in Tawstock) and guarantee of relief, though we do not actually know whether his claim was accepted. Lady Day (25th March) was the normal date for the hiring fairs. (John was really born in Tawstock, but he obviously thought it expedient to claim to have been born in Fremington !)

The examination record mentions a son George, born in 1825, as well as the first child Elizabeth, here unnamed. Prudence bore 7 more children during the next 20 years. John Cawsey junior was born in 1829, followed by James (1833), William (1835), Eliza (1836), Robert (1839), Harriett (1841), and Samuel (1848). Samuel did not survive.

[Working in the lace industry](#)

Much detail can be found in the book "Barnstaple's Vanished Lace Industry" by Peter Christie and Deborah Gehan.

The first lace factory was opened in 1822 at Rawleigh (or Raleigh), a district of Barnstaple. It was in an old woollen factory, with a row of mechanics cottages adjacent. These are the 'Rawleigh cottages', where Harold Charles Cawsey (my father) was almost certainly born, in 1903.

The Rawleigh lace production only lasted 22 years. However in 1825, the newly built Derby Lace Factory had opened in Barnstaple and drew workers to Barnstaple. The Cawsey family seem to have settled in Barnstaple in the 1830s, and were to live the rest of their lives in the Derby area of Barnstaple close to the factory.



With one exception, they seem to have been the only Cawseys in that part of Barnstaple; in 1839 the North Devon Journal reported the following case involving a Mary Cawsey who was working as a prostitute in a brothel in Derby. There actually seems to be no connection between this Mary Cawsey and our John Cawsey.

Catherine Metherell Nutt, the keeper of a notorious house of ill-fame, was brought before William Avery and(?) on Tuesday last, and convicted on a penalty of 30s and costs for an assault on Mary Cawsey, an unfortunate girl of the town. It appeared that the complainant had been one of the wretched inmates and supporters of the defendant's infamous establishment, but recently she had left her and gone to live in a house of kindred description at Derby; defendant was annoyed at the transfer of the complainants prostitution and vented her displeasure in a violent assault upon her. In the investigation of this case a system of iniquity was developed of the most wretched and revolting nature, as shocking to every virtuous feeling as it must prove injurious to the morals of the community. The magistrates admonished the complainant and exhorted her to a more creditable course of conduct and severely reprimanded the defendant. We are glad to hear that it is in contemplation to indict the house at the next sessions as a nuisance.

In 1837 the eldest boy, George, had started work; his apprenticeship is recorded at Fremington - to William Charley, for Gullincott. George would have been 12 years old at the time. By 1840 John and Prudence were living in Newington Street., in the Derby area of Barnstaple.

Between 1841 and 1891, at least 17 of John's family (sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, grandchildren) worked in the Lace Factory, so it is worth setting the scene with some more details of the history of the Lace Industry in Barnstaple. Following the building of the Derby factory in 1825, the development of several new streets of houses for the workers was begun; Boden's Row came first, and Union Street soon followed.. Barnstaple had suddenly become an industrial centre. The factory workers worked very long hours by our standards - from 5a.m to 7 p.m. But many workers earned more than £1 per week - far more than the agricultural workers.



In 1841 the sons John and James were already working in the Lace Factory. James was then only 8 years old! George was still an Agricultural Labourer, as was his father John. In the following years, all the family remained in Barnstaple, with one exception. This was James, whose sad story now follows

[James Cawsey and his transportation to Australia](#)

A "family legend" was passed down the Cawsey family; it was said that one young Cawsey was transported to Australia for stealing apples. The details emerged from discovering references to James Cawsey in the North Devon Journal, and on internet sites relating to Western Australian convicts.

James Cawsey first got into trouble with the police in October 1843, when only 10 years old. His delinquency continued for the next 5 years; he seems to have been quite undeterred by the punishments meted out to him by the Courts, except possibly for a period following his first appearance before the Court of Quarter Sessions, where he was sentenced to hard labour and whippings at the age of 11. The following is a summary of the often lengthy reports of some of his court appearances, discovered through the on-line British Newspaper Archive.

He was already working in the lace factory when he appeared before the magistrates on October 25th 1843 together with two other boys, charged with acts of larceny. On this occasion, the magistrates admonished the parents, and cautioned the boys "to abandon the course of vice which they had so prematurely commenced, which, if persisted in, would probably bring them to an ignominious end."

By the time of the next discovered press report on 27th June 1844, he had already been "frequently before the magistrates and convicted for similar offences". This time he, together with George Petters, was imprisoned for a month for stealing gooseberries. This was not a deterrent to James! He had hardly been released when he returned to fruit stealing. On 28th August he was charged with stealing apples and committed to stand trial at forthcoming Quarter Sessions. And only a week later he faced a separate charge of stealing pears which was added to his indictment.

On 22nd October 1844, James, now 11 years old, stood trial, together with George Petters, aged 13. The Recorder explained that their case did not often occur in criminal courts. They were only there because Peel's Acts had determined that the theft of growing fruit could be regarded as a felony for a second offence following an earlier one which had been dealt with by a magistrate. The prisoners admitted their guilt, and were sentenced

to six weeks' imprisonment, to hard labour, and to be twice privately whipped. The only mention of their age was the slightly inaccurate press report that James was “a very little fellow not more than 8 or 9 years old”,

In December, 1846, together with George Petters and three other boys, James was charged with robbing a shop and was “committed” for 14 days under the vagrancy act. (A month later, George Petters was imprisoned for 23 days as a rogue and a vagabond; this time his accomplice was George Cawsey, James's brother, who got off with an admonition.) In July 1847, James, with David Eames, “two notoriously bad boys belonging to Derby”, was charged with assaulting two old women. They were discharged with a caution because “they had been severely chastised for their fault”. However these were not his only convictions during this period. In his later trial it was said that since October 1844 “he had been repeatedly convicted before the borough magistrates”. And amongst these convictions was one on 15th July 1846 when he was again convicted for stealing apples and summarily punished by a month's imprisonment. That was to be significant.

Barnstaple worthies had had enough of James Cawsey, and the opportunity of getting rid of him came in July 1848 when he was one of seven boys who raided an orchard on Sunday 2nd July. He was rushed before the Quarter Sessions only two days later – and to a degree this was a “Kangaroo Court”.

The Recorder began with sarcasm at the expense of the prisoner - *“On Sunday last some foolish person thinking perhaps that it was a misfortune that they and the Recorder should have nothing to do, had chosen to put himself in a position in which it would become their duty to take cognizance of his conduct. The charge against him was of a trumpery kind—that of stealing apples.”*

He then explained to the Grand Jury the justification provided by “Peel's Acts”. And followed this by a homily on peace and tranquility.

“He would not deny himself the gratification of offering his congratulations to them, which, was sure, they reciprocate. on the state of peace and tranquillity in which this country was preserved, in the midst of the commotions which were unhappily but prevalent in the continent of Europe; and he was quite sure, notwithstanding the comparatively slight demonstrations of an opposite spirit which they had lately witnessed in the metropolis and some of the provinces, that a sound loyal feeling and love of order was too largely shared by all classes of the people of this country to permit any just apprehension that the state of quiet which it now enjoyed could be seriously disturbed.”

The context of this was the European Revolutions of 1848, and the Chartist Demonstrations. At precisely this time, the Chartist Trials were being held at the Old Bailey and some were sentenced to transportation. No doubt the Recorder wanted his audience (the Justices and the Juries) to regard James Cawsey and his like as another threat to peace and tranquility!

These introductory proceedings ended with the Recorder's 'fundraising' for the Tasmanian Mission “for promoting the reclamation of those unhappy persons whose vices had caused them be expelled from their native land.” He said that it was no part of his duty to solicit contributions (but made it clear that at least a shilling each would be appropriate!)

In the trial which now followed, James had no representation; he was on his own, facing the Recorder and five Justices, the Grand Jury, the Petty Jury, the hostile witnesses, and the court officials. There were oddities in the hastily prepared case against him, as the jury discerned; he was accused of stealing “a peck” of apples, a ridiculously large amount; and no stolen apples were discovered. The jury hesitated and were split until the Recorder said “they had better agree”, having himself previously suggested no doubt in the case. So James was sentenced to transportation – and there seems to have been no effort to trace the other six boys.

Such a savage sentence on a juvenile for petty crime seems extraordinary to us now - but it was not abnormal at the time. Peter Christie has described the case of George Thorne, aged 9. The judge at Barnstaple in 1836 sentenced this child - "with the greatest tenderness and humanity" - to seven years transportation to Australia

James Cawsey was first transferred to the Convict Depot - the grim Millbank Prison - for four months as Prisoner No. 15769, initially in a cell in the 'reception ward' and then in a ward where the work was picking oakum. There is no record of him having had visitors. Then, on the direction of the Secretary of State, he was sent to Parkhurst prison on the Isle of Wight to become a "Parkhurst Boy". He was admitted to Parkhurst on 8th November 1848 as Prisoner No. 909.



He remained at Parkhurst until his compulsory exile to Australia in July 1851.

Felons had been transported to penal settlements in the colonies since the early 18th century. But by the 1830s there was public concern about the transportation of juveniles. As a result a reformatory was opened in 1838 at Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight, for training and rehabilitating boys who had been sentenced to transportation. In 1847 an article in the "Illustrated London News" provided a very good description of life at Parkhurst. It said that *"A visit to Parkhurst Prison -- there to witness the exertions of philanthropic enlightenment to reclaim the juvenile offender from the ways of error to the paths of virtue and peace -- is one of the most gratifying scenes of philanthropy to be enjoyed in this great Christian country."*



Boys 'were not allowed to be a moment idle'. On reception into Parkhurst, boys entered the 'Probationary Ward', where they were confined to cells for about 19 hours of each day, being released for periods of exercise, school, chapel, and cleaning duties. School instruction during this period was mainly religious and moral. Prisoners had an 'occasional opportunity of quiet consideration of their condition and prospects and reflection on the admonition and instruction they had received'. After 4 months, depending on the recommendation of the chaplain, boys moved to the General Ward and a slightly easier regime with more emphasis on training boys in useful practical skills.

Food was very basic, with plenty of oatmeal gruel (one pint at supper), but Sundays were special. Plum pudding was served to those boys who had conducted themselves properly, while those who had committed trivial offences were marched out to parade in the yard!

The article included this drawing of the smartly dressed Prison Officers and Prisoners. The Officers of the Prison wear blue frock-coats, cloth caps, and leather belt and strap holding keys. Each Prisoner wears a leather cap bearing on its front the Boy's No. in brass figures; the trousers and jacket are of grey cloth; on the left breast of the latter are sewn P.P. and the No. and P.P. on the left thigh. The rest of the clothing is striped shirt, leather stock, waistcoat for winter wear, worsted stockings and boots.



After 2 or 3 years at Parkhurst, boys were compulsorily transported to Australia or New Zealand as exiles. On arrival in the Colony they were given their "Ticket of Leave" immediately and were 'free' - but subject to certain rules. They were apprenticed to a settler (providing him with cheap labour) .They had to report regularly to a magistrate; and church attendance was compulsory. Any misdemeanours landed them back in prison.

James remained at Parkhurst for two-and-a-half years and was trained as a bricklayer. (The skills given to Parkhurst Boys were very varied). When he left Parkhurst it was recorded that a sum of 7 shillings and eightpence was due to him on account of earnings and private cash, and that sum was sent to Western Australia.

He was one of a group of 30 Parkhurst Boys who embarked on the frigate "Minden" at Cowes on July 7th 1851. The "Minden" began its journey in the Thames and made calls at Woolwich, Portsea, Cowes, Portland and Plymouth, embarking prisoners at each stop.

The voyage of the "Minden" is extraordinarily well documented. John Gorman, one of the "Pensioner Guards" wrote a daily diary which has survived, as has the account written by the ship's doctor, John Gibson. Gorman's diary provides a great deal of graphic detail about life on board - the birth and baptism of twins, the deaths and burials at sea, the food and the drink, the misdemeanours (not only among convicts) and the punishments meted out. Gibson seems to have been very kind to the convicts, who wrote him a letter of thanks in which they referred to a happy and comfortable voyage. Gibson's account of life on the "Minden" gives fascinating detail about the 85 day voyage to Fremantle. The weather was fine, good health generally pervaded the ship, and after their working day and their supper the "Prisoners were encouraged in the Diversions such as Dancing, Music, Leap Frog and the Boxing Gloves" ! (See the internet pages for full transcript) James Cawsey's own behaviour was reported as 'good'. We know that he brought two shillings to Australia, in addition to the money transferred by Parkhurst, and this money was entrusted to John Gibson.



Their destination was the "Swan River Colony", which was to become Western Australia. The colony had only been established for 20 years, and only contained a few thousand people. Many convicts were being sent there, and would soon become a large part of the population.

The Minden reached Fremantle in October, and all convicts (not only the "Parkhurst Boys") obtained their "Ticket of Leave" on disembarkation on 14th October 1851. They are nevertheless included in convict records, together with physical descriptions. James Cawsey was described as 5' 0½" tall, 'stout', with sandy hair, an oval freckled face with blue eyes. He had lost the first joint forefinger on his right hand.

We believe that James was initially employed on Public Works in Western Australia, and bricklaying was presumably a useful trade in the developing colony. He must have behaved himself, because he obtained a "Conditional Pardon" in March 1854, a year before his "Expiry Date". This Pardon entitled him to live and work where he chose within the Colony of Western Australia. He was not permitted to return to the UK or travel to eastern Australia without permission from the colonial authorities. He almost certainly remained a single man. He seems to have become deranged, and was admitted to Fremantle Lunatic Asylum with dementia on 19th November 1867, and he remained there under treatment, probably until he died "suddenly in a fit of apoplexy" on 19th June 1869.

The old asylum is now the Fremantle Arts Centre, reputed to be one of the most haunted buildings in Western Australia. There are reports of at least three ghosts who walk the corridors both day and night! Perhaps one of these is "5' 0½" tall, 'stout', with sandy hair" !



[The Cawseys who remained](#)

We now return to the remainder of John and Prudence Cawsey's family. There is little known about the two girls, Eliza and Harriet, who married in Barnstaple. But the remaining four sons, George, John, William and Robert, all made news in one way or another – usually by appearance before the magistrates! And George and John both married feisty women, Dinah and Ellen, who themselves both appeared before the magistrates.

The next few paragraphs are concerned with the brothers George, William, and Robert. After that we will continue with the lives of John and Prudence.

George Cawsey

George was the eldest. In 1847 he was brought before the magistrate together with George Petters, They were both said to be well known to the police office. However George Cawsey seems to have kept out of further trouble, and he married Dinah Essery in 1851. Dinah's grandmother was Mary Popham, a woman with a certain notoriety! At a time when there were many illegitimate children, Mary Popham had at least four. Ann Essery, Dinah's mother, was presumably one of these. George was then a block maker, and he and Dinah set up home in Newington Street right next to the 'Newington Inn', where in 1853 the North Devon Journal recorded 'one of the most disgusting occurrences'. One Henry Dunsford engaged to drink half a gallon of ale in eight minutes for a bet of 8d. He succeeded, but the next morning he was found dead and cold. The inquest next day was followed by the prosecution of the landlord - who was fined 5/-.

Another incident involving George occurred in 1857, and was reported as follows:

A "DARBY" Row—The Bench was occupied for a considerable time in hearing a case of assault. Mary Anne Kingdon widow, of Newington-street, summoned George Cawsey, her neighbour, for striking her two blows, on the morning of Thursday, the 19th instant. Mr. Ingledon Bencraft appeared for the defendant. A number of witnesses were examined, but their evidence was very conflicting; some deposed to having seen Cawsey in Kingdon's house, where the assault was alleged to have, been committed, while others swore that he did not cross the "dreck-stool " of her dwelling and that all he did was to ward off the missiles which complainant was propelling at his head. —Case dismissed.

George and Dinah were next in the news in 1863, the following being reported in the North Devon Journal on December 7th.

Matrimonial Jars.— George Cawsey, of Derby, was brought up charged with brutally ill-treating his wife, Dinah Cawsey, by striking her with his fists on the 4th instant. — Mr. I. Bencraft appeared for the defence. —The wife told her sad tale, but was frequently interrupted by her husband, who appeared before the Bench in a beastly state of intoxication, and conducted himself in such an outrageous manner that we thought the magistrate scarcely vindicated the majesty of the law or their own dignity in not ordering him into custody for contempt of Court.—The case was adjourned to the next day.

- and then in the same issue

BARNSTAPLE POLICE. Tuesday, December, 15. [Before, the Mayor, (T. W. M. Guppy, Esq.), and Geo. E. Kingson, Esq.] Using Abusive Language.— George Cawsey was charged with using violent and abusive language to the Borough Magistrates on the day previous, while answering to a charge preferred against him for ill-treating his wife.— Superintendent Blauchard proved the case.—The defendant expressed contrition for the offence.—The Mayor said the magistrates felt the insult deeply, and they fined him 5s. and costs. Defendant was also ordered to find sureties that he would keep the peace towards his wife for six months.

But Dinah herself was no meek housewife! On 23rd July 1868 we find:

BOROUGH MAGISTRATES' SESSIONS. This-day (Thursday.) Present: —Mr. Cotton (in the chair,; and Mr. Farleigh, justices.] Assaults. — Dinah Cawsey, of Belle Meadow, was fined 2s. 6d. and 17s. 6d. Costs, for assaulting Ann Pickard, widow, on the evening of Friday, the 11th instant.

George died in 1871, only 45 years old. Dinah by then had borne six children, and lived many more years.

William Cawsey

William was 10 years younger than George, and seems to have kept out of trouble as a youth. He married Ann Boaden in about 1856. During the next 20 years he was involved in a few incidents which were reported. First, William was in court in 1860 charged with assault on a Jane Bawden of Derby). Then in 1866, the following was reported:

BARNSTAPLE POLICE COURT. Saturday, April 28th. [Before the Mayor, H. I. Gribble, George E. Kingson, and T. L. Willshire, Esqrs., justices.] Larceny and Assaulting the Police.— Jas. ... and William Cawsey, operatives employed at Derby Lace factory, were brought up charged with stealing a quantity of pea sticks and with assaulting a policeman in the execution of his duty.—P.C. Serjeant deposed that he was on duty on the preceding night in the vicinity of the factory gate, when he saw the prisoners coming down the hill—one of them carrying a bundle of sticks (produced). He demanded where they got them, when Cawsey said " It's my sticks, and I asked him (Darke) to carry them." He expressed his suspicion that the property was stolen and said he should take them into custody, which both resisted. Darke caught him by the collar and tore his uniform and Cawsey kicked him. The injury done to his clothes was valued in 15s. Both prisoners got off at the time ; but he reported the case to the Superintendent who proceeded with sufficient force and took both men into custody.—Cross-examined by Mr. Bencraft: —They gave me their names and stated where they lived. We broke in Cawsey's door, because he refused to open it. I charge both prisoners with larceny, with an assault, and injuring my clothes. —Mr. Blanchard applied for a remand, which Mr. Bencraft resisted ; but the Bench acceded to the application, and the prisoners were liberated on bail—to be brought up again on Monday.

William was involved in another incident in 1876:

INSULTING A YOUNG WOMAN

William Cawsey,dealer, was summoned for having on 8th July been drunk and riotous and also with having used indecent and obscene language towards a young woman named Bessie Dunsford who is employed at the factory of Messrs Miller.

From the evidence of the young woman it appeared that while going to work after breakfast on the morning of the above mentioned day she was met by the defendant, who apparently much the worse for liquor accosted her and because she would not reply to him, made use of insolent and abusive language. Sarah Prust who was in last witnesses company, was also called, but she stated that upon her companion's refusing to reply he simply said "Oh! you've got on the wrong clothes". That was all she heard, and she was not able to say whether the defendant was drunk.

Defendant denied that he was drunk and said that the only remark he made was that repeated by Prust. After a brief consultation the Mayor said the Bench would give the defendant the benefit of the doubt in reference to the charge of using abusive language; but he must pay a fine of 6s and costs for having been drunk.

Ann Cawsey died in 1885, and William remarried three years later.

Robert Cawsey

Robert was the youngest of the sons of John and Prudence Cawsey. As a lad, he seems, like William, to have kept out of trouble. Like the others, he started in the lace factory, but subsequently became a butcher. Robert married Anna Maria Upcott in 1864; they had about nine children, Robert's weakness seems to have been his behaviour under the influence of drink ! The following are items from the North Devon Journal in 1865, 1872, 1891, and 1901

1. Robert Cawsey was summoned for having, on the 23th August, used abusive and indecent language to Sarah Brent, in Newington-st., Derby, contrary to the 37th bye law. Mr. I. Bencraft appeared for the defendant. The complainant, whose evidence was mainly corroborated by several other witnesses, deposed that she visited her sister in Newington-street, and found that the latter was having some dispute with the defendant, who lived nearly opposite her. She advised her sister to go into her house, when defendant, addressing her, said, " You had better get home you yellow-faced" This was denied, and two witnesses for the defence stated that complainant was the aggressor.—The Bench, however, fined defendant 2s. 6d. and costs; in default, seven days' imprisonment.

2. Robert Cawsey, a butcher, of Newington-street, was charged with using obscene, abusive, and indecent language on the 28th ult.—Defendant said he was in his own house, but did not know whether he was noisy or not. —P-C. Molland deposed that at about twenty minutes to one on the morning of Sunday the 28th ult. he heard a noise in Newington-street, Derby, and outside of defendant's house saw his wife with a child in her arms and a boy by her side. Cawsey was inside swearing, and making a noise. A man and woman came out of the house, and suggested that he should remain near. Told the wife to go in with the children, and on her doing so defendant used such violent and disgusting language towards her that she came out and shut the door, when he kicked a piece out of it. The woman went into a neighbour's, but defendant continued threatening what he would do if she came near him, and, sharpening a knife on a steel, said, " Here's three — knives, and if I don't put one into your — heart this — night, I — me, if I'm hung for it." By defendant : Did not see you in the house, but can swear to your voice : know that pretty well.—The Mayor reminded the man that he had before been convicted of assaulting the police and also for being drunk and riotous. He must now pay a fine of 40s. and costs, or in default undergo a month's imprisonment with hard labour.—A week was allowed for payment

3. Robert Cawsey, slaughterman, was charged with having been drunk and with having abused the Rev John Eagle, in Boutport Street on the 15th of September.—The Rev J Eagle said that while walking along Boutport Street on the afternoon named, defendant (who was very drunk) almost collided with him. Defendant, became very abusive, and said to him, Are you a b parson ? " Witness did not answer Defendant continued a torrent of abuse until he reached the Butchers' Row: and he then went to the Station house and informed the police of defendant's conduct. It was with the greatest reluctance that he appeared against Cawsey ; he would much rather have appeared against those who supplied him with the drink.—P.C. Edwards gave corroborative evidence, and Superintendent Songhurst said that when drunk defendant was a very noisy man.—The Bench inflicted a fine of 10s and costs, or in default seven days' imprisonment.

4. " I suppose I am guilty ; I can't say any other. I am innocent, though, for all that." This was the reply of Robert Cawsey, -slaughterman, in a charge of disorderly conduct whilst drunk at Vicarage-street on May 23rd.—P.C. Pook stated that defendant was rambling drunk, and shouting "You Conservatives are all alike. You are a mean lot. and not worth a" On seeing him, defendant moved away.—Fined 5s. inclusive.

We now return to John Cawsey. He may well have been the best-behaved of the Cawsey brothers, since no incidents involving him have been discovered prior to the 1872 case which is described in due course.

By 1851, John and Prudence, with William and George, were living in Union St., still in the shadow of the lace factory. John Cawsey junior, and his new wife Ellen, were living in Reform St., very nearby. George, John, William and Robert all had families in Barnstaple; more than 60 'Cawsey' entries appear in the Barnstaple Parish registers in the years which follow, and there is only one of these which definitely applies to an unrelated Cawsey family. Prudence Cawsey died in 1853, but John survived to the age of 74, dying from bronchitis in 1865.

In 1850 John Cawsey junior married Ellen Perryman.

Ellen Perryman

Ellen Perryman was of illegitimate birth and the naming of her father as 'Isaac Perryman' on her marriage certificate in 1850 was an 'error'. Her age was given as 19 on the certificate, though she was actually under 18 years old at that time.

From the census returns we know that Ellen was born in Great Torrington, where the registers show that 'Eleanor Flora' was baptised on July 1st 1832 'base daughter of Mary Perriman'. The name of the father is not given. Two years later, in 1834, Mary Perryman married Isaac 'Latchman', a widower and 'sojourner'. It seems certain that this was Isaac Lakeman born in Ugborough in South Devon, and that the Lakemans returned to the Plymouth area. No doubt the Lakemans brought up Eleanor (Ellen) as a small child. However Isaac died in 1842 and Mary in 1843 when Ellen was only 11 years old. She may then have returned to North Devon -perhaps to her grandmother, Margaret Perryman, in Torrington.

There were a number of Perryman families in Great Torrington, but Mary Perryman actually came from nearby Little Torrington. Her father William lived all his life there, but her mother Margaret, nee Alford, came from High Bickington, several miles away. The Alfords were prosperous yeomen farmers in the High Bickington area. In 1757 some affidavits were raised by one Edward Gammon regarding a debt owed to him by Lewis Alford of High Bickington, yeoman. In 1780, George Alford was farming at Diptford, to the south of High Bickington village. His brothers John and Lewis were farming at 'Chapples Diptford' and 'Yeos Diptford', and Mary Alford and Catherine Alford (widows no doubt) were occupying other farms nearby. The Land Tax Assessments continue to show the Alford family as occupiers of a number of properties right through to the 1830s. George Alford himself was the joint assessor of the taxes for a few years around 1816. In 1809 a property known as Heal Down was the subject of a conveyance from John Eastman and John Hierd to William and George Alford, for a consideration of £300.

George Alford died in 1826, aged 71. In his will he left £150 to his wife and amounts between £30 and £50 to his surviving sons and daughters. £30 was left to Margaret Perryman. Memorials to George Alford, his 'relict' Margaret, his son Lewis, and to several other Alfords, are still prominent in High Bickington churchyard.

The Alfords of High Bickington achieved some notoriety in 1837. Robert Alford, "27-year-old son of a High Bickington farmer", was taken into custody charged with the murder of James Knight, an itinerant quack doctor. Alford was said to have drunk 10 half-pints of beer and a share of 3 quarts 'but he was not so drunk as he had been on former occasions'. The trial verdict was manslaughter rather than murder, and Robert Alford was sentenced to 'transportation to parts beyond the seas for the term of his natural life'. Robert Alford was a cousin of Margaret.

There is not much trace of the Perrymans at Little Torrington; there is however a small memorial to 'Jane, daughter of William and Margaret Pereman', who died an infant in January 1824.

[John and Ellen Cawsey](#)

At the time of their marriage, Ellen was already expecting their first child, Elizabeth.

In 1850, Elizabeth was only a few months old when Ellen was directly involved in an unfortunate tragedy. The newspaper report began:

A CHILD KILLED BY OVERDOSE OF NARCOTIC POISON. We regret to have record an instance of the fatal effects —on the one hand, of druggists not exercising sufficient care in dispensing and vending drugs of deleterious nature, and on the other, of the dreadful and dangerous practice, so prevalent among the working classes, of mothers accustoming their offspring to noxious doses, for the purpose of quieting them to rest, and thereby permitting their parents to be free for other engagements practice, we are afraid, exceedingly common, and which, if not often productive of immediately fatal consequences, in the present instance, must in numerous cases lay the foundation of delicacy in future life, and probably induce premature decline and decay. We trust the records of the following case will have the effect of opening the eyes of mothers the wickedness of this insidious custom; as well as of inculcating dealers in these deadly mixtures the necessity of extreme caution in dispensing and supplying them.

In this case, the mother, Mrs Brent had already given her fractious child a dose of “Godfrey's Cordial” (treacle containing a little opium, often known as “Mother's quiet”). Because the child remained extremely cross, she was on her way to buy a further pennyworth of Godfrey's Cordial from Mr Tatham when she met Ellen Cawsey who mentioned that “Mr. Weeks's stuff was much better than Mr. Tatham's—that it was more composing, and quieted the child directly”. Ellen herself gave evidence later in the inquest, saying ***“I have a child which is six months old, and I occasionally give it, when very cross, a dose of Godfrey's Cordial. In consequence of Mr. Weeks's mixture being better than Godfrey's Cordial I have later had his. When I give my child a dose, it will sleep soundly for three hours, say from ten in the morning to one . The child is not dull or stupid afterwards that I can see”.***

Mrs Brent's child died as a result, and the lengthy evidence at the inquest indicated that the Mr Weeks's mixture contained too much opium, by far.

John and Ellen Cawsey were both employed in the lace factory in Barnstaple, he as a 'lace-twister' and she as a 'lace-winder'.

At much the same time, one John Poslett, born in Barnstaple in about 1830, was working as a lace twister at the lace factory at Tiverton. The daily lives of John and Elizabeth Poslett and their children were chosen to describe the “Days in the Life of a Victorian” in the “Virtual Victorian” web pages (<http://tofino.ex.ac.uk/virvic/day/home>). Lace twisters were the operators of machines which twist the silk around to make the net. Poslett usually got fifteen shillings a week, working from 6 a.m. To 6 p.m.

John and Ellen Cawsey first lived in Reform St; then they moved into the Union St house that had been the home of John and Prudence; finally, their family now large, they moved into Queen St.. The next photograph shows 10 of their total of 17 children and dates from about 1874, shortly before Ellen's death.

In the back row are 4 of the 5 eldest boys - James, John or Harry, Edwin and Robert. In front are Polly, Isaac, Jessie, Thomas, Joseph and Nellie. The following table is a list of the family in full.



	<u>born</u>	<u>died</u>	<u>address at death</u>
Elizabeth	1851	1853	Derby
John	1852		
Henry (Harry)	1853	1945	Bideford
Thomas	1855	1870	Queen St.
James	1856	1891	Princes St.
Edwin (Edward)	1857	1930	Isle of Wight
Isaac	1859	1861	Union St.
Robert	1860	1935	2, Vicarage St.
Mary (Polly)	1862	1930	Bristol
Isaac	1863	1926	Exeter
Alfred	1865	1865	Union St.
Ellen (Nellie)	1866	1944	
Joseph	1867	1930	Loverings Court
Jessie	1869	1935	Reform St.
Elizabeth	1870	1870	Queen St.
Thomas	1871	1945	7, Lower Gaydon St.
Alfred	1874	1874	Newington St.

John and Ellen Cawsey clearly led a turbulent life; their large family was not a recipe for peace and domestic bliss. We know of three occasions when their behaviour led to appearances in court; the first was reported as follows in 1859:

BOROUGH MAGISTRATES' PETTY SESSIONS, [Magistrates Present:— The Mayor (R. Bremridge, Esq.), Dr. Bignell, William Young, John K. Cotton, John Morris Fisher, and Frederick Maunder, Esqrs.] Offence against the Bye-laws.— Ellen Cawsey, of Union-street, Derby, was summoned at the instance of Sarah Cure, her neighbour, for using toward her abusive and violent language, on the afternoon of Friday, the 24th ult. The parties are both married women, whose husbands are operatives in the Lace Factory; and the cause of the quarrel appeared to be the fact that some one had attached a placard to the boundary wall of the factory, which imputed to the defendant an improper connexion with one " Farmer George." Mrs. Cawsey, having a suspicion that complainant had some hand or part in casting the foul imputation upon her fair fame, applied to her certain uncomplimentary epithets, which, it was alleged by one of the witnesses, Mrs. Cure freely reciprocated. —Several persons gave evidence, pro and con., and the Bench inflicted a mitigated penalty of Is., and 12s. 6d. expenses; cautioning each to be more correct in her deportment in future.—At the conclusion of the case, the Rev. H. J. Bull, incumbent of Magdalene District, in which the parties reside, addressed some remarks to two of the magistrates, which were not audible to the Court. The reverend gentleman's gesticulations were noticed by the Mayor, who said, " Mr. Bull, if you have any observations you wish to address to the Bench, I shall be happy to hear you."—Mr. Bull:—No; the case is at an end; it is all over now.—The Mayor:—Then I cannot allow you privately to address individual magistrates. —The reverend gentleman then withdrew.

Sarah Cure was the wife of Robert Cure, another Lace Twister. Both appear in the book "Barnstaple's Vanished Lace Industry. Sarah was a witness in the 1842 case in which one Thomas Reeves was charged with embezzlement of a considerable sum of money from the Lace Factory. Robert Cure was involved in a fight in 1874.

At just about this time in 1859, John's cousin George Cawsey from Tawstock married Grace Beer and moved into Barnstaple. He was accepted into the Barnstaple police force as a police constable (1861 census). This did not last very long. He had already been reported five times for misconduct when in August 1865 the police were called to the "Admiral Vernon" to find an intoxicated George Cawsey involved in a fight in which "much blood was spilt". It started with John Huxtable fighting both the landlord and William Cawsey (John's cousin, not his brother) who fell to the ground and was kicked in the face by Huxtable. George Cawsey then stepped in to defend his brother. Then the police superintendent and a constable entered to find his officer "mad drunk". George was dragged outside, kicking and swearing, and the result for him was summary dismissal from the police force. George then seems to have gone back to the land, becoming a gardener.

John Cawsey earned a good wage in the lace factory. The report of the third incident (below) refers to his "bragging as to the amount of money he had got", and his wife telling him that he had "better bring his sovereigns home". By 1871 John and Ellen were living in Queen Street with 11 children ranging from John aged 19 to Elizabeth aged 1, with Thomas on the way. They could afford a "servant", Jane Brooks, though she was only 14.

Ellen now went into business – perhaps as early as 1866. The following advertisement appeared regularly in the North Devon Journal starting in 1871. Though Ellen died in 1875, the advertisements continued until the middle of 1876.

MRS CAWSEY 4, Queen Street Barnstaple

Is now purchasing LADIES & GENTLEMEN's WARDROBES, Beds, Bedding, Carpeting, and children's left-off clothing of any description; also OLD BOOTS AND SHOES for which she is giving the very best price in ready money.

P.S. Country Orders by letter promptly attended to or Parcels received and Cash remitted on Delivery.

Ellen was involved in another incident in 1871

BOROUGH MAGISTRATES' SESSION. Thursday, August 31. [Before T. L. Willshire, Esq. (in the chair), J. M. Miller, H. Dene, and G. E. Kingson, Esqrs.]

A SCENE AT DERBY. Ellen Cawsey, a shopkeeper at Derby, was summoned for using obscene language towards Ann Webster, contrary to the 36th bye-law. Mr. Bromham appeared for the complainant, and Mr. R. I. Bencraft for the defendant. Mr. Bromham said his client's father unfortunately happened to be in prison for committing an assault, and ever since the defendant had annoyed complainant about it, and had also accused her of stealing a tea-caddy. Complainant said she was a glover working at Mr. Baylis's factory. On the 21st August defendant accused her of stealing a tea-caddy, and made use of indecent gestures and disgusting language. By Mr. Bencraft : She had been in trouble sometime since about some jewellery and had suffered for it, but she did not know anything about a tea-caddy. Priscilla Mcβride deposed to having heard defendant accuse complainant of stealing a tea caddy ; and Ellen Sampson said she heard Mrs. Cawsey make use of the indecent expression referred to by the complainant. Mary Webster, mother of the complainant in the last case, was summoned for using obscene language towards Ellen Cawsey. Mr. Bencraft appeared for complainant. Complainant said that on the 21st August defendant's boy stole a marble from her little boy, and she said that his mother was as bad as he, as she saw him do it. As she was going up the street defendant said, " There goes the drunken old b ; she has only been in business five years, and she ought to be made tell where she got her money." Elizabeth Mugford, a neighbour, gave similar evidence. The Chairman said they considered each of the defendants had been guilty of bad language, and much more of an offence against public morality. They would be fined 5s. each and costs.

The complainant, Ann Webster, was married to Henry Webster. Henry had a sister, Selina, who was to become Selina Cawsey when John remarried after Ellen's death. That unhappy marriage will be covered below.

John still frequented the "Union Inn" - in Vicarage Street, and no doubt close to their original home in Union Street.

We now come to the story of their dispute in March 1872, when John and Ellen quarrelled in the Union Inn, and John was brought up in custody, charged with assaulting his wife. The lengthy report in the "North Devon Journal" is abbreviated below.

Abbreviated from "North Devon Journal" 7 March 1872



ASSAULT CASE -HUSBAND AND WIFE

John Cawsay, employed at the lace factory, was brought up in custody charged with assaulting his wife. Ellen Cawsay, the complainant, figured in court with her eye frightfully black, cut, and swollen. She declared that she did not wish to press the charge. He was a very good husband before he picked up with bad company. She did not wish to hurt him, but for protection for herself and 11 children, whom she had to work very hard to help support - not one being able to support him or herself and to prevent him taking away what little things she had got. She had had 16 children christened, and she thought it hard to be served as she was. Her husband hearkened to his brother out at Derby, who had a dog, and was out poaching all winds and weathers. About eight o'clock on the previous evening she went to the Union Inn, found her husband there and told him he had better bring his sovereigns home for the support of his family. He swore, said she had no business to come after him, and struck her on the eye.

Mr Thorne, defending John Cawsay, submitted that what Mrs Cawsay did was improper and unjustifiable, and he thought he should show that the blow was not given by the husband. Was it wise or justifiable for her to go to a public house for him! If she had not gone there, the assault would not have occurred. He had been at work all the week, and his being in a respectable public house on Friday evening and nothing to give his wife cause of complaint. She went in, and without a word struck him such a blow with an umbrella that it was broken in the scuffle. She was the aggressor, and in the scuffle received a black eye: prisoner did not retaliate after she struck him. She aimed a desperate blow at his head with the warmer, and the impression was left on his hat; that was more than human nature could bear, and he believed any man would have done something then in retaliation. He was apprehended and locked up without a warrant, and he submitted that in that respect he was an injured man. What earthly reason was there for that? He thought their petitions ought to be reversed.

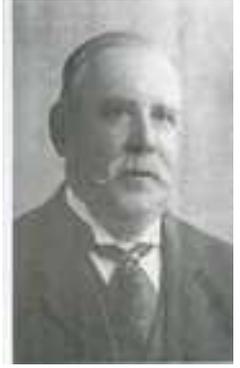
Mr Thorne called witnesses who deposed that defendant was sober and quiet before his wife came in. She came in like a mad woman and struck him with the umbrella without his having struck or spoken to her, and then she aimed a warmer at his head. Three women took Mrs Cawsay out: she struggled to get away and wanted to come back again.

After hearing the evidence, Chairman fined John Cawsay the small sum of £1 and expenses. It was a most brutal, unmanly and cruel assault, and had his wife not desired not to press the charge the punishment would have been very much more severe.

One of the magistrates who heard the case was John Miller, the owner of the lace factory and a Mayor of Barnstaple. One assumes that he knew John Cawsey well.

The witnesses in this case included John's brother, William Cawsey, together with James Turner and James Darke. All three were involved in the following affair two years later.

In 1874 there was a period of discontent at the factory because of the long hours. There was a lock-out, and a court case brought against some men for conspiracy - including Turner and Darke. There was hard feeling against one Bessie Dunsford who was brought in to work a lace machine - normally considered to be a man's job. James Turner said she was "an old horse-marine" and told her to "change her clothes". In a later case, a summons was brought against William Cawsey for insulting Bessie Dunsford. (Already referred to above)



When Ellen died in early 1875, John was left with about seven young children living at home at Queen Street. The solution was remarriage. After only a few months, he married Selina Webster, a 42 year-old spinster. But though this meant that the children were cared for, this was to lead to a very unhappy outcome 4 years later.

Before long, John and his family, now including Selina, moved to 15 Reform Street. The 1879 Rate Book shows that John actually owned the house - quite unusual. No doubt he used the money from Ellen's business dealings - which Ann Webster had referred to. ("*... she ought to be made tell where she got her money*")

[Edward and James join the Army](#)

The events of the following year suggest that home life had become rather unhappy by 1878, and in May both James and Edward joined the Army and left Barnstaple.

Edward joined the Royal Engineers and served for 25 years, becoming a Master Sergeant. Most of his service was in the "East Indies", and he was awarded the "India Frontier Medal, with Burma Clasp" and a Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. He had married Alice Osborne at Gillingham in 1881 and when they returned home on his discharge in 1903 they had seven children. They then settled at Cowes (Alice's home) and Edward then had a second career as a Ship Builder.

James did less well. He also joined the Royal Engineers and served at Gibraltar and in the Egyptian campaign, where he was awarded the Khedive's Bronze Star, and the Egyptian Campaign Medal with Suakin clasp. He was transferred to the Reserve in 1886, returning to Barnstaple. He was discharged in 1890 and died only a year later.

[Back in Barnstaple](#)

In August 1879, the North Devon Journal published a long report which began :

BARNSTAPLE. SUICIDE OF A WOMAN AT DERBY. On Friday afternoon there was a rumour that a woman living Derby, in this borough, had hanged herself. At first it was treated with incredulity, being regarded as perversion of the report of the attempted suicide of the day before ; but enquiry proved it to be perfectly true. The unfortunate woman was Selina Cawsey, the wife of John Cawsey, a lace-twister, employed at the Derby Lace Factory, and living in Reform-street. She had made two or three previous attempts on her life, and on Friday afternoon, being in drink, and having had a complaint from her husband that he could not eat what she had provided for his dinner, she went to her bedroom and hanged herself from the bedstead. She and her husband had not lived happily for some time, and the probability is that domestic troubles produced a temporary aberration of mind, during which the predisposition to suicide which she undoubtedly had, caused her to commit the rash act.

This was followed by a long account of the inquest and of the evidence given by John Cawsey, his son Isaac, and others. John described the incident which led up to the suicide -

When I went home to dinner it was about twenty-five minutes past two. There were some cow-heel on the table and some potatoes, and about cupful of peas was boiling on the fire. She told me Mr. Abbott, of Gaydon-street, had called to see me, and I then asked her what she had got for dinner, and she replied cow-heel. I went to the table and tasted the cow-heel, and finding it was tainted I spat out what was in my mouth, and said, " I can't eat this : it is not fit for anyone to eat: it is passed." She turned round and sat down for about two minutes. I said, " Get me something else." She said, "You can't have anything more until by-and-bye." She then went upstairs. I supposed she had gone up because there should be no bother, and I never thought about going up after her. angry words passed between us. I remained about 10 minutes after she had gone upstairs, and finding she did not get me anything else I went out.

After a good deal more evidence, the coroner concluded that

- although the Cawsey household was not a happy one, there was no reflection upon John for having ill-treated his wife, and the only verdict that the jury could return was an open one that the deceased hanged herself while in state of temporary insanity.

Despite the many transgressions which had involved the whole family during their childhood, the Cawsey children grew up to be generally well-behaved citizens!

There was just one amusing incident involving Henry in 1871!

BOROUGH MAGISTRATES' SESSIONS. Thursday.—[Before Henry Dene, Esq. (in the chair), G. E. Kingson, Esq., and J. M. Fisher, Esq.]

Throwing Snowballs in the Vegetable Market. —Three youths, named Henry Cawsey, Queen-street, George Saunders, Holland-street, and James Ham, Myrtle Place, were severally charged by P.C. Rowe with disturbing the peace of the Vegetable Market, on Sunday evening, by throwing snowballs at each other. The lads "dodged" the constable repeatedly on his attempting to catch them, running in and out of the building a dozen times. — Two of the defendants received good characters from their employers, in consideration of which they were discharged on paying the costs, and the the third boy was also let off on a similar consideration.

And in 1888, James, having returned to Barnstaple, was in a little trouble, as follows.

AT the Guildhall on Tuesday, before O S Willshire, Esq and W Smyth, Esq, James Cawsey, coach builder, 5 Princess Street, was charged with having refused to leave Mrs Seldon's licensed premises when requested to do so by P C Holland and with having been drunk and disorderly in Boutport Street. Defendant, who pleaded guilty fined 10s and costs. The money was subsequently received

In 1881 John was still at his home in Reform Street with Robert, Mary, Nelly, Joseph and Thomas. In about 1883, Mary, not yet married, seems to have had a son John Cawsey . A few years later she married Enoch Chapman, a Chair Maker; they had a son William Chapman, and two daughters Mary and Annie.

Also living in Barnstaple, but outside Derby, was cousin George Cawsey, the dismissed policeman in 1865, and now a gardener by trade. This picture from around 1880 shows George, his wife Grace, and their children John, Nell and Georgina.



Grace died of cancer in 1888, and two years later George married again - to Annie Eliza Gammon. There is a memorial in Barnstaple cemetery to Grace, Annie Eliza and George.

This information, together with the picture, was provided by Richard Butler. He is Georgina's grandson who now lives in North Devon.

In 1888 Thomas, apparently then working as a butcher, signed up for the Devonshire Militia, but in 1891 he purchased his discharge for £1.

In 1891 many of the survivors of John's family were still in the area - scattered between several houses. John himself was living with his daughter Mary, now Mary Chapman, in Reform Street. Joseph and Thomas were living with their elder brother Robert and his wife Susan in Vicarage Street. James was lodging at the Union Inn. Jessie and Nellie were lodging at different houses in Bodens Row. We know that Isaac worked as a baker's assistant Henry had left Barnstaple and was living in Bideford in 1881, working as a house-painter.

In the 1890s, Thomas met his future wife. Caroline Hunt, a farmer's daughter, had come to Barnstaple from Bratton Fleming and in 1891 she was working as a domestic servant at 41 Higher Maudlin Street, just around the corner from Thomas in Vicarage Street. This picture shows her at this time. Her family background was very different to that of Thomas. Her father was a yeoman farmer



[Into the Twentieth Century](#)

John Cawsey died in 1899 but his younger brothers lived on into the next century. William Cawsey, now 64 was living in Reform Street in 1901, and was still working in the lace factory. He was in the news in 1912 when as a 76 year old pensioner he "accomplished a remarkable feat, walking to Filleigh and back, a distance of 20 miles". Robert, aged 60, a slaughterman, was living in Newington Street in 1901. John's sister-in-law, Dinah, now 69, was living with her daughter Kate (Mogridge) in Rolle Street. Both Robert and William died in 1918 and Dinah 6 years later, then aged 91.

We also know the whereabouts of a number of John and Ellen's children and grand-children in 1901. Henry was still living in Bideford with his wife and six children. Robert, a wood-turner and Susan, with two sons, were still living in Vicarage Street, Barnstaple. Mary (Chapman) and her family were now in Prince's Street. Her son John Cawsey, now 18 years old, was said to be 'feeble-minded'. Ellen, still in Reform Street, and unmarried, had a daughter Winifred. Jessie, a 'cotton-packer' was lodging in Vicarage Street.

Of John and Ellen's large family about 9 or 10 lived on well into the 20th century. The unmarried daughter Ellen married James Bendle in 1906, and Ellen's daughter, Winifred Cawsey, was living with them in 1911.

The unmarried Joseph died in 1930. We learn from the press report of his funeral that he had worked for 51 years in the lace factory. He was said to have left 4 brothers (Henry, Robert, Thomas, and one unnamed in the report – perhaps John?), and 3 sisters (Polly – Mary Chapman, Nell – Ellen Bendle, and Jessie)

Jessie Cawsey remained unmarried, and on her death in 1935 Thomas acted as Executor; Harold was a beneficiary, probably receiving about £50.

Amongst the cousins, Robert's son Frederick became the station-master at Barnstaple.

Thomas, Caroline, and Harold Charles Cawsey

Thomas, the youngest, had left the lace factory, and was now working in the glove works as a 'leather-parer'. He was lodging at 8, The Priory in the Pilton district of Barnstaple. He was soon to marry Caroline Anna Hunt and they set up home at 4, Raleigh (presumably one of the 'Rawleigh Cottages'), where Harold Charles was born on 17 April 1903.

Following their marriage, and the birth of Harold, Thomas and Caroline soon set up as shop-keepers at 7 Lower Gaydon St, and kept shop there for some 35 years.



Harold attended the Wesleyan Elementary School in Gaydon St. until 1916. He was then 13 – and that was the school leaving age at that time – a gradually raised school leaving age since some schooling became compulsory in 1870.



The Cawseys of Victorian Barnstaple were not an educated family. John and Ellen themselves were illiterate. Thomas Cawsey, his brothers, sisters, and cousins, generally went to school for a while, probably at the Wesleyan School, but left to start work when they were 10 or 11 years old. And in 1916, most of the children of Harold's age leaving the Wesleyan School would have started work at the Lace Factory or elsewhere. So it was fairly remarkable that Harold continued in education beyond the school leaving age, going on from the Wesleyan to Barnstaple Grammar School, then to Teacher's Training College, and finally getting a degree. He was obviously seen to be a clever boy, and Caroline, his mother, gave great support and encouragement.

Harold went to Barnstaple Grammar School from 1917 to 1921 and in 1921 went to Westminster Training College for two years.

In this picture he is at the right of the third row, next to the lamppost. Westminster Training College was a Wesleyan Methodist foundation. The principal at this time was Rev. Dr. H. Workman, pictured below.



From 1923 to 1925 Harold taught at Swadlincote in Derbyshire before returning to London to teach at Buckingham Street School. Ida Hammet had already joined Buckingham Street School as an infants teacher, and in the next picture she is by the window.

In 1927, Harold began studying for a Degree, based on six-years of part-time attendance at Birkbeck College. In 1929 he moved from Buckingham Street School to Queen's Road, Hackney, where he taught until 1938. In 1931 Harold and Ida were married at Holly Park Wesleyan Church.

David was born in 1932; a year or two later the family moved to a new house at Chanctonbury Way, Woodside Park.

In 1938 Harold was selected as Headmaster of Ben Jonson School, Mile End, at a salary of £438. (The North Devon Journal reported "Barumite's Promotion") He was then the youngest Headmaster in London. The war then

caused the evacuation of the school to the Slough neighbourhood. The evacuation took place on Saturday September 2nd 1939 The Daily Mirror report included the following:

"At the Ben Jonson School, Mile End, mothers were allowed into the playground where 300 boys and girls said a bright 'cheerio' to their mothers. Then Mr H.C. Cawsey told the parents: 'Your children will be safe. Remember Mr Morrison's message and smile!'"

A short while at Iver Heath was followed by five years at Eton Wick. There, the Ben Jonson School was first installed in the Village Hall, but combined with the Village School in January 1942. Harold then returned to London as Headmaster of Senrab St., E.1, travelling from Eton Wick each day. In 1944 he decided to 'downshift' to avoid the difficult daily travelling, and took up an Assistant Masters post at Windsor County Boys School.

Three years later Harold was appointed as Headmaster of Trevelyan School, Clarence Road where he remained for 15 years until retirement.

Connections with Barnstaple got less and less. Caroline Cawsey had died in 1935. Thomas continued with the shop for a few more years. He died in 1945. Harold never seemed to have had close links with his Cawsey cousins – far more with the aunts and cousins on his mother's side. And the Barnstaple of his boyhood was now very different. The Cawseys of Victorian Barnstaple would not recognise the old Derby district now. It was demolished almost entirely for the building of the Inner Relief Road. Some 800 houses were destroyed and families relocated. Princes Street (now called Princess Street) remains, but Reform Street, Union Street, Bodens Row and Newington Street have disappeared. But the 'Heathcoat' Fabric works still occupies the old lace factory.

But in 1949 he seems to have decided that many Barnstaple people would remember Thomas and Caroline and the following item appeared in "Barnstaple Brevities" in the North Devon Journal. (It's hard to think of anyone else who would have submitted it)



State Scholarship

David Cawsey, the grandson of the late Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Cawsey, of Barnstaple, has been awarded State Scholarship on the result of the recent Higher Schools' Examination. He has been attending the Windsor County Grammar School and goes to Christ's College, Cambridge, immediately.

One further connection with Barnstaple developed.

Harold's school secretary at Trevelyan was Mrs Ena Butler and it was discovered that she was a distant cousin. Her mother Georgina Tester, who was still living at that time (early 1950s) was the Georgina Cawsey, daughter of George, (the intoxicated policeman), and Grace, shown in the picture a few pages back.

That's not the end of the story! But it's a good point at which to stop, since the personal links with the Lace-worker Cawseys of Victorian times had come to an end, and the area where they lived had been destroyed.