

### *Joseph Bowyer*

(An account written on New Year's Eve 1903 by G. H. Heaton)

Joseph Bowyer was born at Stanley on 24th January 1818, and died at Brown Edge on 28th December 1903. He was the youngest son of Mr. Samuel Bowyer. He first attended a dame's school at Stanley, taught by Mrs. Willott, and afterwards the Parochial School at Endon Bank, leaving the latter at the age of eight to go with his father's boat.

He was among the first to attend the Sunday School conducted by the Parish Clerk (Mr. James Baddeley) in one of the stone-built cottages in the village of Endon, whence the children were taken to service at the Parish Church, stowed away in the gallery, and solemnly kept in order by an official armed with a long stick. His earliest years of labour were devoted to the boating of limestone from Froghall, for Joseph Brindley of Longport, varied by occasional journeys with the boat into the 'Black Country' of South Staffordshire.

When 16 years of age, his father died, and Joseph took charge of the boat in his own account, bringing his earnings to his mother with whom he continued to make a home, and carrying limestone from Froghall as before. Three years later, when only 19 years old, he made an expedition in charge of his boat to London, the object of his journey being to fetch some carved stone for the entrances to the great mansion at Trentham which the Duke of Sutherland was then building. Being detained for eleven days at Paddington canal basin, Joseph had opportunities for sight-seeing in the great city, and apparently turned them to account, for to the last he retained a recollection of the places of interest which came under his observation.

Returning to Trentham, he was a participator in the young Duke's coming-of-age festivities, and if the truth must be told, Joseph, among convivial friends in the Servants' Hall, recounting his London adventures, made slightly too free with the excellent home-brewed ale, liberally served but in a two-handled mug, and required to be assisted to his bed-chamber over the Stables.

Subsequently, during a period of seven years, Joseph found employment under Mr. Trubshaw, the contractor, in boating stone and other materials from various parts of the country for the building of Trentham Hall, so that he could boast of having had a not inconsiderable hand in the rearing of the present magnificent pile.

Stone flags from Yorkshire, and slates from Wales, formed some of the cargoes he carried, as he pursued the even tenor of his way along the canal system.

Later on, he conveyed stone blocks on which to rest the metals of one of the earliest railways in the country—that from Crewe to Stafford—only to find in a few years 'those blocks superseded by wooden sleepers.

Going back somewhat, Joseph was married to his first wife, Jane Wakefield, of Ladderedge, at Leek Parish Church, at the age of twenty-three. He took her to live at Post Bridge, Endon, where she died in less than three years afterwards and was buried at Endon, leaving behind two children. After completing his job at Trentham, and for the railway contractor, Joseph once more undertook the boating of lime and limestone, this time for Mr. Edwin Heaton, who then had kilns at Post Bridge, Endon, and in whose services he remained until Mr. Heaton relinquished the business.

Seven years after the decease of his first wife, Joseph married Sabra Sheldon of Brown Edge. The marriage took place at Stoke Church, and in due course they had thirteen children of whom, however, only four survived.

Some time later he boated coal and slack for Richard Deane, colliery proprietor of Norton, who owned as many as twelve boats.

His leisure time was spent in a becoming and orderly manner, for many years he was a member of Robert Heath's Bible Class at Brown Edge, a communicant and a great believer in the due and proper observance of the Sabbath. 'Not slothful in business, serving the Lord' may well be written as his epitaph, and may the example he left behind be a pattern for many of the younger generation in Brown Edge and the neighborhood against whom it is sometimes alleged that they love their dogs better than their wives and children, and a public house better than a place of worship.

