

Metalwork

A blacksmith was at work in East Street in the 12th to 13th century, and smithies were recorded outside the east gate in 1223—4, possibly enlarged in 1254, and in North Street in 1301.¹ In 1273 there was a smith at Shoreditch possibly working on the same site as the 19th-century smithy.² By the 19th century there were smithies throughout the town and surrounding area.³ Taunton's craft metalworkers included cutlers by the 1260s.⁴ There were 11 in 1861 and five remained at work in 1891.⁵ A girdler was recorded in 1300, a lorimer was recorded in 1302,⁶ a kettle maker in 1404, a sievier and a lorimer in 1426,⁷ wire drawers in the later 15th century and a spurrier in 1470.⁸ A Welshman refurbished swords in the early 17th century.⁹ Pewterers were recorded from 1497 to 1625.¹⁰ A man died in 1684 with over £130 in pewter, brass and lead in his shop and over £100 owed on his shop book but there is no reference to tools.¹¹ A pewterer took a paying apprentice in 1715.¹²

The many medieval goldsmiths recorded from the 13th century probably served wealthy townsmen and rural gentry.¹³ Although there was no official Taunton mark a cross with four pellets is found on Taunton-made plate as well as the Taunton rebus.¹⁴ Some goldsmiths were apparently aliens like Theodoric Tybus in 1475 and John Garrett, who

¹ *PSANHS CXXXVIII* (1994), 180; SHC, T/PH/win 1223—4, 1253—4, 1301—2.

² SHC, T/PH/win 1253—4; tithes award, St Mary.

³ SHC, tithes award, St James and St Mary.

⁴ E. Green, *Feet of Fines 1196—1307* (SRS 6), 201—2; *Cal. Pat.*, 1266—72, 202.

⁵ SHC, Q/SR/6/95—6; Siraut, *Som. Wills*, 240; Devon HC, Z1/10/729; TNA, RG9/1617—18; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

⁶ SHC, T/PH/win 1301—2.

⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1401—5, 342; SHC, A/AHT/4.

⁸ TNA, CP40/807, image 666; 871, image 1029: www.waalt.uh.edu/index.php/CP40 accessed May 2021. *Pardon Rolls of Edward IV and Henry VI, 1468—71*, (List & Index Soc. 360), p. 82.

⁹ SHC, DD/SP/63 (1619).

¹⁰ TNA, CP40/907, image 503; 1420, image 5; 1434, images 534, 578: www.waalt.uh.edu/index.php/CP40 accessed May 2021; SHC, Q/SR/57/100.

¹¹ SHC, DD/SP/1684/113.

¹² TNA, IR1/44, p. 37.

¹³ E. Green, *Feet of Fines 1347—99* (SRS 17), 98; Hants RO, 46M72/T90/1; SHC, T/PH/win 1288—9, 1298—1300, 1412—13.

¹⁴ T. Kent, *Spoons and Goblets; Seventeenth Century Somerset Silver* (Taunton, 2004), [12, 14, 19].

helped to finance trade in the early 16th century and may have trained Henry Arnold to whom he left money and clothing in 1560.¹⁵ His successors were Osmond Garrett (d. 1596) and Henry Arnold (d. 1579) who made communion cups for local churches in 1574.¹⁶ Richard and John Femell were goldsmiths in the 1550s.¹⁷ Robert Wade (d. 1622) specialised in making silver spoons and apprenticed his sons Matthew and Robert to London and Bristol goldsmiths respectively. The younger Robert took over his father's business but in 1633 was fined for substandard spoons and later retired to Bridgwater.¹⁸

The Dare family were prominent gold and silver smiths in the 17th and 18th centuries and their spoons survive in west-country museums.¹⁹ They were descended from a wealthy merchant Thomas Dare who owned a large quantity of plate.²⁰ His grandson and namesake (d. 1663) was apprenticed in London before returning to Taunton where he was in trouble in 1633 for substandard silver and using the London assay mark, which he excused saying his shop was the Lion.²¹ His son, also Thomas, produced good quality work and in the 1670s was asked to assay ore from a Dulverton mine.²² He became involved in politics, supporting the exclusion of James, duke of York, from the throne and was tried for sedition. He went to Amsterdam, leaving the business to his wife Ellen, and joined Monmouth only to be killed in a dispute over a horse in 1685. Ellen carried on the business possibly until 1738 but although two of her sons became goldsmiths they appear to have been retailers only.²³ Samuel Dell (d. 1698) a tenant of the Dares, with whom he may have worked, produced silver tablewares,

¹⁵ TNA, CP40/853, image 58: www.waalt.uh.edu/index.php/CP40 accessed May 2021; C 1/625/9—10; PROB 11/43/492.

¹⁶ Kent, *Spoons and Goblets*, [4]; at least one dated 1574 is in the Museum of Somerset.

¹⁷ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/M/22/1; *Cal. Pat.*, 1558—60, p. 207.

¹⁸ TNA, PROB 11/140/46; Kent, *Spoons and Goblets*, [5, 12, 21].

¹⁹ Wilts and Swindon HC, 644/20/3—5; SHC, Q/SR/77/85—6, 131/19, 152/3; D/B/ta/31/5/3; C. Jackson, *English Goldsmiths and their marks* (1949), 457.

²⁰ TNA, PROB 11/62/392.

²¹ Kent, *Spoons and Goblets*, [5].

²² M. Siraut, *Exmoor: the Making of an English Upland* (2009), 99.

²³ Dorset HC, D/BLX/X9; Wilts and Swindon HC, 644/20/1—2; Kent, *Spoons and Goblets*, [5—7, 10, 14 22].

buttons and boxes. His wife Susanna, worked at the trade as did John Smith in the 1660s and 1670s before migrating to Barnstaple, Richard Hamlin (d. 1734), who made church plate, and possibly members of the Foy and Lake families.²⁴ James Foy and Company were goldsmiths in 1772 but later the Foys were watchmakers and silversmiths.²⁵ Although many of the ten gold and silversmiths recorded in the 19th century were largely retailers they made and engraved items.²⁶ In 1900 one silversmith made replica bronze bowls from Glastonbury lake village.²⁷

By the late 16th century large quantities of iron were being shipped upriver from Bridgwater with increasing quantities of coal probably for smithing. One merchant brought 85 tons of iron upriver in a single year in the 1590 and another shipped 146 tons in 1630.²⁸ In 1616 a Cardiff blacksmith was ordered to demolish the forge he had set up in the market place or be deported.²⁹ Another smith erected a forge in Paul Street in 1618.³⁰ Boys were apprenticed to blacksmiths in the later 17th and 18th centuries and others to a brazier, a whitesmith and a copper smith in the 18th century.³¹ The 1774 polls included c. 47 metalworkers, mainly blacksmiths but also white and gold smiths, plumbers and tin plate workers.³² A poll book of 1820 included 49 smiths, 10 plumbers, seven silversmiths, four watchmakers but only one whitesmith and no goldsmiths out of c. 80 metalworkers.³³ In 1831 there were c. 70 metalworkers in St Mary's parish alone.³⁴ By the mid 19th century it is not always possible to distinguish manufacturers from retailers and blacksmiths worked in a

²⁴ SHC, DD/SP/1698/18; Kent, *Spoons and Goblett*, [7—8, 20]; SHC, Q/SR/131/19, 22; 356/1/6.

²⁵ TNA, IR1/58, p. 164; IR1/68, p. 200; IR1/71, p. 180.

²⁶ Hastings Museum, SOC4/4/4; TNA, RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

²⁷ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1900), 110.

²⁸ SHC, D/B/bw/1477, 1884, 1508—9.

²⁹ E. H. Bates-Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1607—25* (Som. Rec. Soc. 23), 239.

³⁰ SHC, DD/SP/50 (Oct. 1618).

³¹ SHC, D/P/tau.m./13/3/5, 13/6/1—2.

³² SHC, DD/HC/6/1/1; SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/22.

³³ SHC, D/P/tau.m./23/29.

³⁴ SHC, D/P/tau.m./23/16.

range of industries and most mills, factories, foundries and engineering works employed them. A small number of farriers or shoeing smiths were recorded but c. 50 general blacksmiths in 1841 rising to 112 in 1891 reflects the expansion of factory and engineering work. White, copper and wire smiths, tinplate workers and braziers accounted for a further 54 in 1841 declining gradually to 33 in 1891 presumably mirroring the increase in factory production.³⁵ There were also several specialist metal craftsmen notably locksmiths throughout the 17th and early 18th centuries,³⁶ edge tool makers in the early 18th century,³⁷ and coach spring makers, file cutters, saw setters and scale beam makers in the early 19th century.³⁸ Electro-plating was carried out from the late 19th century and in the 1950s a works was in business in Staplegrave Road.³⁹ In 1972 there was an engineering pattern maker in Belvedere Road.⁴⁰

Foundries

Bells were founded from the late 14th century but Roger le Belyeter or bell founder was recorded in 1296—7.⁴¹ Brassworkers was recorded in the 15th century and in 1460 a Taunton brazier made bearings for the bells at North Curry.⁴² A field near Haydon was known as Casting Grove from the early 17th to early 19th century presumably referring to earlier activity.⁴³ There was a brass foundry east of North Street in the late 16th or early 17th century casting vessels and bells and both churches had bells cast in the early 17th century including

³⁵ TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

³⁶ SHC, Q/SR/76/157, 111/47—8; DD/DP/24/2; DD/CH/77/3; DD/SP/162, 338, 356, 423; N. Devon RO, B1/46/106; Devon HC, 1198A-1/PO/113; TNA, IR1/41, p. 28; IR1/49, p. 184.

³⁷ Devon HC, 3212A/PO104/10.

³⁸ *Pigot Dir.* (1830, 1842); *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5.

³⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 362.

⁴⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 386.

⁴¹ Below, rel. hist., priory; SHC, T/PH/win 1296—7..

⁴² TNA, CP40/641, image 788; 861, image 563; 907, image 63: www.waalt.uh.edu/index.php/CP40 accessed May 2021; R. Dunning and M. McDermott, *Church Accounts 1457—1559* (Som. Rec. Soc. 95), 22.

⁴³ SHC, DD/SP/74, f. 220; Devon HC, 74B/MT/1918. Later corrupted to Gasters Grove: SHC, tithe award, St Mary.

two by Thomas Purdue in 1626.⁴⁴ In 1799 a wealthy brazier left a house, shop and furnaces to his nephew, a jeweller.⁴⁵ In 1814 c. 60 founders and whitesmiths took part in the victory procession.⁴⁶ Backland and Sons in 1838 were brass, tinsplate, zinc and wire workers.⁴⁷ The presence of a number of foundries in the early 19th century provided sufficient business for specialist iron merchants. From the 19th to mid 20th centuries founders were also engineers and machine makers.⁴⁸

The Cox family of ironmongers built an iron and brass foundry in Foundry Square off Tancred Street on the gardens of a house called Fountleroy. In 1810 Charles Cox, sergemaker (d. 1813), his brother William and nephew William Charles Cox, ironmongers, entered a partnership to run it. They produced penny tokens in 1812 showing furnaces and a founder with a tapping bar and pig iron, which were said to have circulated for many years.⁴⁹ The old partnership having lapsed with Charles's death a new one was created with Charles's son William Blatch Cox but he fell out with his uncle and cousin and under an 1818 agreement was to be repaid his investments but share the loss on the firm's copper tokens.⁵⁰ In the mid 1830s the firm moved to Tangier in Bishops Hull but retained the Foundry Square premises and owned many cottages in Duke and Tancred Streets, Foundry Row and Foundry Square.⁵¹ They produced sets of skillets and pans and some small items may have been made in the workshops behind their shop west of Fore Street where they carried out re-bronzing and made grates.⁵² The Foundry Square property was sold in 1844 to tanner William French with the

⁴⁴ S. Blaylock, 'The Archaeology of West Country Brass Foundries', *West Country Households 1500—1700* (Woodbridge, 2015), 274, 292; below, rel. hist.

⁴⁵ SHC, DD/BR/gd/3.

⁴⁶ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (printed insert, 1814).

⁴⁷ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/5.

⁴⁸ *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Pigot Dir.* (1842).

⁴⁹ Som. HER, 31755; www.finds.org: SOM-171DDD; SHC, T/PH/bb/4; DD/CH/22, 70/10; Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Taunton Courier*, 11 Oct. 1865.

⁵⁰ SHC, DD/CH/69/3.

⁵¹ Bishops Hull, econ. hist.; SHC, D/DC/tau,d/25/7 (802, 1252); DD/SAS/C212/13/1, pp. 63—4.

⁵² SHC, A/DZE/7. Cox skillets can be seen in the Museum of Somerset, Taunton.

former foundry, a lace factory with engine house and engines, workshops and seven houses.⁵³

In the 1830s George Cox, at first with his brother William Charles, ran the grate manufacturing business and was followed by Edward George Cox in the 1850s. The workshops were later used for electricity works.⁵⁴ A rival stove manufacturer was Thomas Fisher whose family maintained a large ironmongery store at 8—9 Fore Street from the 1830s to the 1880s.⁵⁵

In the mid 19th century the Savery family had the Priory Foundry in St James Street east of the church at Priory Gate and the St James's Foundry in Savery's Court, now Foundry Road, employing up to 30 men moulding and casting.⁵⁶ Robert Savery (d. 1857) of the St James Foundry, built shortly after 1823 on a former coalyard, made the clock for the South Road convent and was given a cast iron headstone.⁵⁷ However, by 1841 he had largely retired and sublet the iron foundry, factory or workshops, yard and wharf to Thomas Richards and his partner John Blake. Richards had an adjoining engine house and mill with a wharf.⁵⁸ After Robert's death Joseph Savery gave up his Mill Lane foundry and took over the St James Foundry, having already bought a house and court nearby in 1834. The foundry was bought by his son Alfred, ironfounder, in 1866 and was probably the foundry with 10 employees in 1881 when it was offered for sale as Alfred was in debt.⁵⁹ He died in 1882 and the following year the foundry was taken over by James Stevens who cast the ironwork for Firepool weir. The works was said to be noted for making large weighbridges.⁶⁰ Stevens was followed by Ernest William Stevens a manufacturer of heating and ventilation equipment in 1895. He

⁵³ SHC, D/CH/22.

⁵⁴ *Pigot Dir.* (1830, 1842); SHC, DD/CH/74/10; Harrison, Harrad & Co. *Dir. Som.* (1859); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); below, local govt., elec.

⁵⁵ *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); Harrison, Harrad & Co. *Dir. Som.* (1859); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (18883—9).

⁵⁶ TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

⁵⁷ SHC, DD/HR/3; DD/AY/6; Q/REI/35/25b; A/AQZ/2—3; A/BKP/3.

⁵⁸ SHC, D/P/tau.ja/4/3/1; Q/Rup/192; DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 50.

⁵⁹ TNA, RG11/2368; SHC, DD/HR/3—4; DD/HWN/11; *Taunton Courier*, 7 Apr. 1880: BNA accessed 21 June 2022.

⁶⁰ *Taunton Courier*, 2 June 1883: BNA accessed 21 June 2022; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889, 1894).

later traded with Charles Samson as heating engineers and artesian well borers subletting most of the site until they went into receivership in 1903.⁶¹ They were followed by iron workers Hubert Rudman, H. T. Lancey and John Craven who in 1909 became Rudman, Lancey and Company and ran the foundry as an engineering works comprising foundry and fitting shop with offices and stores producing pumps, bearings, band saws and other factory machines with c. 50 employees. During the First World War it was a munitions factory but in 1918 the company went into liquidation.⁶² The surviving buildings were converted to residential use and later into offices.⁶³

The Priory Gate foundry was held from c. 1824 by William Savery and in 1864 was run by his son James who manufactured ranges and stoves, church clocks, hydraulic rams, and pumps as well as iron and brass castings in 1872.⁶⁴ The foundry, adjoining the cricket ground, remained in the family but had closed by the 1890s.⁶⁵ It was entered by an arch through 27 St James Street and had a number of cottages in its yard. The foundry was a three-storey stone building backing onto the cricket ground with a parallel two-storey range of workshops by the 1880s.⁶⁶

The Tone Bridge iron and brass foundry north-west of the bridge with a large wharf on the river was begun c. 1819 on a garden on the south corner of the road to Dyers Green, later Wood Street, belonging to Bridge House.⁶⁷ It was run by John Sandsbury until 1842 when he sold the business with a 6 h.p. engine.⁶⁸ By 1861 it was run by Cornelius Lovell, in 1864 by Alfred Savery and in 1872 by Mrs Lane, presumably widow of implement maker

⁶¹ SHC, Grand World's Fair Bazaar programme (1895), 12; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1897, 1899); Som. HER 14501

⁶² TNA, IR 58/82602 (956); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); Som. HER 14501.

⁶³ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 50.

⁶⁴ SHC, Q/REI/35/25b; *Goodmans Dir. Taunton* (1864); *Morris and Co. Dir. Som.* (1872).

⁶⁵ SHC, A/BKP/3; D/B/ta/24/1/17/668; DD/SAS/C2401/69; TNA, RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

⁶⁶ SHC, DD/SAS/C2401/69; DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/18.

⁶⁷ SHC, DD/CWC/ta/unlisted acc. no. G/2468.

⁶⁸ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830, 1842); SHC, D/B/ta/13/1/1; SHC, DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 90 ; DD/SAS/C212/Map 151.SCC, HER, 31755.

Robert Lane who employed five men in 1871.⁶⁹ In 1879 Charles Allen and Son had taken it over and built a new foundry on the site of a seedsman's conservatory on the corner of Wood Street. The firm continued to enlarge the premises over adjoining property as a foundry and engineering works with large showrooms on Bridge Street. They supplied and built agricultural steam engines up to 14 h.p., machines for paper mills, laundries and breweries, and electric light and telephone standards in 1890.⁷⁰ It probably employed most of the c. 60 foundry workers recorded in 1901.⁷¹ By 1914, renamed the Tone Engineering Works, it had become primarily a motor garage and was rebuilt in mock-timbered style c.1927 with shops for subletting.⁷² It closed and the buildings were remodelled c. 1968 for shops. The motor workshops behind were all demolished in 1969.⁷³

The small North Town foundry on the site of Yarde House near the junction of Bridge Street and Staplegrove Road, also known as the Phoenix Factory, was kept by a succession of founders from the 1860s including Alfred Ingram who employed 14 workers in 1871 making steam engines and boilers, presses, castings, tanks and mills. The factory also made steam pleasure boats and small bridges.⁷⁴ It had an engine house, a 32ft by 29ft fitting shop and cottages and was occupied by Kallends until the mid 1870s when it was sold for housing.⁷⁵ The firm of Kallend or Kelland and Son brass and iron founders manufactured coach springs in 1852 and scale beams at 15 Bridge Street between 1861 and 1883 employing four men.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 91; *Morris and Co. Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA, RG10/2374.

⁷⁰ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; TNA, RG12/1875—7; *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 46; TNA, IR 58/82608 (4580).

⁷¹ TNA, RG13/2276—8.

⁷² *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); SHC, D/PC/b/hl/2/1 (1914); D/B/ta/4/3/4 (1927); below, this section.

⁷³ SHC, DD/FIV/1/38; above, intro.

⁷⁴ *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); *Morris and Co. Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA, RG10/2374.

⁷⁵ SHC, DD/HS/1/3.

⁷⁶ Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); *Morris and Co. Dir. Som.* (1872); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883); TNA, RG10/2374..

A scale manufacturer was in Queen Street in 1842.⁷⁷ In 1914 scales were being made in a workshop in Upper High Street, which remained in business in 1972, and weighing machines in Albemarle Road.⁷⁸ Agricultural implements were made in Taunton including reaping and mowing machines and there was an implement foundry in Coal Orchard in the 1860s.⁷⁹ During the 20th century there were several agricultural engineers including Hawkes in East Street and others in Priory Bridge Road near the cattle market.⁸⁰

Instrument Making

A watchmaker who died in 1695 appears to have retired having only two watches and no tools. By that date watches and clocks were common in inventories even for people of modest means. Sampson Wroth (d. 1714) had two old and three unfinished watches, a clock mechanism, brass, a small forge and casting trough and various tools so was making as well as repairing timepieces.⁸¹ John Coles was a clock and watchmaker in 1784.⁸² Between 15 and 20 clock and watch makers were usually at work in the 19th century including two members of the Schwere family in 1841 and the Lake family who were at work by 1804 and were also opticians.⁸³ Up to 40 people were in the business in the early 20th century and seven firms in 1972 but they were retailers and repairers rather than makers.⁸⁴ There were at least two gunsmiths in the mid 18th century and up to six in two premises in High Street and another in

⁷⁷ *Pigot Dir. Som.* (1842).

⁷⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/132/7589; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 416.

⁷⁹ *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866).

⁸⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1906—39); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 367.

⁸¹ SHC, DD/SP/1693/31, 1695/35, 1714/10.

⁸² SHC, DD/SAS/C238/5

⁸³ TNA, IR1/71, p. 133; IR1/72, p. 13; *Pigot, London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830); *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

⁸⁴ TNA, RG13/2276—8; RG14/14234—40, 14242—5, 14247, 14249; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 428—9.

East Street in the later 19th century.⁸⁵ One firm, started in 1815, had by 1890 become a sports retailer but guns were still designed, made and repaired on the premises and the owner kept a shooting range. By 1894 the business had moved to Fore Street as the West of England Gun Works and remained open until 1977 or later and was still making guns in the 1930s.⁸⁶ A percussion cap maker was at work in 1830 and two bullet makers in 1861.⁸⁷

Two organ builders were recorded in 1839 and three in 1842 including James Ling who rebuilt the organ at St Mary's church and had a workshop in Trinity Street.⁸⁸ He was followed in the 1870s by John Minns who built a factory off Lower Middle Street behind his shop at 32 North Street in 1883 and employed five skilled workers in 1891.⁸⁹ Henry Knight, who had probably worked with Minns, had his own business by 1900 and worked with his son in East Reach. They had turned to selling music and instruments by 1914.⁹⁰ By the 1890s the Minns family also kept a music shop and in 1895 the organ building business was sold to George Osmond who had worked with John Minns and probably employed five organ builders recorded in 1901.⁹¹ In 1908 the company became George Osmond and Son, later Company, using Minns' Middle Street factory. In 1928 they established a large organ works on St Augustine Street in the shadow of the collar factory. In the 1950s they employed 25 skilled craftsmen but their customers were 'poverty stricken churches'.⁹² In 1954 the public were admitted to see a new teak and mahogany organ being built for a church in Kingston,

⁸⁵ TNA, IR1/21, p. 83; IR1/55, p. 89; *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866), *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 87; *Morris and Co. Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

⁸⁶ *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 35; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1894, 1914, 1923); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 394; *Taunton Silver Jubilee Programme* (1977), unpaginated. The Somerset Rural Life Museum has a cartridge case.

⁸⁷ *Pigot Dir.* (1830); TNA, RG9/1617—18.

⁸⁸ *Pigot Dir.* (1830, 1842); SHC, D/P/tau.m/4/1/9 (1853); *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); TNA, HO 107/1922—3; RG9/1617—18; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 95.

⁸⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/18/726; TNA, RG12/1875—7.

⁹⁰ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1900), 166; .SHC, A/DIF/101/8, 101/10/192; *Bishops Hull, econ. hist.*; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

⁹¹ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883—1914); TNA, RG13/2276—8.

⁹² *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1927); .SHC, D/P/wilt/23/41; D/B/ta/24/1/68/1309; D/B/ta/13/3/1, p. 32.

Jamaica.⁹³ They were maintaining up to 2,000 organs in 1961 but closed c. 1986.⁹⁴ In the early 21st century The Deane Organ Builders was based at the Trinity Business Centre in South Street Taunton but had moved out by the 2020s.

Other skilled instrument makers included barometer makers and a piano maker in 1861. A sewing machine factory established by 1881 employed at least 11 men in 1891 but only 2 were recorded in 1901.⁹⁵ Singer's had a repair workshop in Middle Street in the 1950s.⁹⁶ Lewis Dick and Son were scientific instrument makers in Guildford Place, High Street having left London during the Blitz. It was a small firm employing eight people making laboratory apparatus until the mid 1960s or later.⁹⁷ From c. 1945 until the 1970s F. H. Wrigley Ltd, begun in Yorkshire in 1920, were plastic manufacturers in Albemarle Road using the former maltings to make fillers and filters.⁹⁸ In 1983 Exmoor Plastics were a small business manufacturing surgical implants.⁹⁹

Engineering

Several engineers were recorded in the 19th century, a few were civil but others were mechanical. Engineers were recorded in Shuttern and Paul Street in the 1860s and 1870s and some foundry operators described themselves as engineers from that period.¹⁰⁰ Electrical engineers or fitters were recorded by the 1880s and in 1891 53 steam and electrical engineers

⁹³ SHC, A/BRF/1.

⁹⁴ SHC, A/AWT/1.

⁹⁵ *Pigot Dir.* (1842); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7; RG13/2276—8.

⁹⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 88.

⁹⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957);, 60 .SHC, A/APN/2/6; SHC, R.P. Elliott, 'Taunton: an urban study', TS Durham BA geog. dissertation c. 1966, 21.

⁹⁸ *Taunton Courier* 14 May 1949; BNA accessed 12 May 2022; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957) 2; SHC, A/APN/2/6; D/B/ta/24/1/225/14295.

⁹⁹ *Som. Business Dir.* (1983), 76.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866), Morris and Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872).

and fitters lived in Taunton.¹⁰¹ By 1901 there were over 180 engineers, fitters, armature winders, boiler and pattern makers and engine builders, mostly living in St James parish and probably working at Eastons or Newtons as 44 were steam engine builders and 70 were electrical engineers and fitters.¹⁰²

Walter Easton, engineer and great grandson of surveyor, Josiah Easton,¹⁰³ began operating the Whitehall Iron Works in Albemarle Road in 1879 and worked with civil engineer Samuel Waldegrave, son of a bishop, manufacturing steam engines, waterwheels, turbines and castings. He also equipped buildings for electric light and hired out machinery.¹⁰⁴ In 1890 Waldegrave went back to university and was replaced by Henry Bessemer, grandson of Sir Henry. In 1893 after Waldegrave was ordained the business became Easton and Bessemer, mechanical engineers specialising in fitting up horizontal and vertical engines for electric lighting and woodworking and building hydraulic pumps and portable steam engines. The works then comprised an engine house, an iron and brass foundry, boiler making and pattern shops and a new fitting shop with steam-powered forge hammers, turning and planing equipment. The firm employed over 40 skilled men.¹⁰⁵ The company built the engine for the Taunton Electric Lighting Company but bought in and installed the plant for the later generating works in St James Street. As well as vertical, horizontal and locomotive type engines they made Cornish and Lancashire boilers. They supplied the engine and boilers for the Creech paper mill in 1905 and were building engines up to 680 h.p. Most of the factory was rebuilt in 1902.¹⁰⁶ Bessemer was replaced by Walter Johnson c. 1909 and in 1910 Easton and Johnson Limited had a moulding foundry, smithy

¹⁰¹ TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

¹⁰² TNA, RG13/2276—8.

¹⁰³ Bradford on Tone, econ. hist. Josiah's son James founded Easton and Amos of Erith, Kent.

¹⁰⁴ SHC, A/GCQ cat.; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883, 1889).

¹⁰⁵ *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 233; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1899).

¹⁰⁶ SHC, Easton and Bessemer Ltd, catalogue 22; D. Eaton, *Easton and Johnson and the Whitehall Ironworks* (Taunton, 2003), 5, 12—13, 20—1.

and fitting shops.¹⁰⁷ In 1919 they bought and demolished Albemarle House to build another foundry.¹⁰⁸ They supplied factory machinery throughout Britain and overseas and maintained farm machinery and steam road rollers in the early 20th century. They also provided street gratings and inspection covers, still in use in the area. During the 1940s they produced valves for gun turrets and exported vertical engines to Africa. They had expanded the site taking over a terrace of houses as stores.¹⁰⁹

In 1963 the firm built a new paper making plant at Maidenhead and supplied machinery to the Exeter paper mill.¹¹⁰ In 1965 they became part of the Reed Group, specialising in the production of paper-making and waste paper handling machinery under the name Handley Machines.¹¹¹ In 1975 they were taken over by Price and Peard and the works became an assembly plant only and redundant buildings were let out. The factory closed c.1999 and in the early 21st century the site was used by several small businesses. Few original buildings survive except the roadside brick erecting shop and 1913 office building still bearing the name 'Easton and Johnson'.¹¹²

Electrical Engineering

John Brewer Saunders was an electrical and telegraph engineer whose company built and maintained telegraphs for railway companies in south Wales in the 1860s and 1870s.¹¹³

Electrical engineer Francis Murray Newton of Corfe produced improved arc lights, which he demonstrated at Allens' Tone Bridge works using their gas engine and patented in 1882.¹¹⁴

In 1884 he built an engineering works in a smithy and former gymnasium between Bridge

¹⁰⁷ TNA, IR 58/82613 (2058); SHC, A/CJC/1—2.

¹⁰⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/49/782.

¹⁰⁹ Eaton, *Easton and Johnson*, 28, 30, 33.

¹¹⁰ SHC, A/CGQ/2.

¹¹¹ SHC, A/APN/2/6; A/CGQ/2.

¹¹² SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/46/676, 24/1/49/777; *Easton and Johnson*, 26, 34.

¹¹³ TNA, RAIL 382/75, RAIL 679/72; Morris and Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872).

¹¹⁴ SHC, A/BKK/1/6. The company used 'Arc' as their telegraphic address: *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1927).

Street and Yarde Place.¹¹⁵ The premises became inadequate and in 1891 Newton (d. 1905) built a large factory between the railway and Cyril Street in Rowbarton. The firm invented bogie dynamos to light railway carriages and built electric motors and transformers, low voltage fuse and switch boards for power stations, dynamos for large houses and submarines and designed and fitted heating, light and ventilation systems for public buildings in Britain and overseas.¹¹⁶ During the First World War the block by the railway was used as a munitions factory.¹¹⁷

In 1917 Newtons Ltd bought their site on the corner of Cyril and Herbert Streets from Thomas S. Penny.¹¹⁸ By 1922 the business had been acquired by Rotax (MA) Ltd but still known as Newtons under which name they exhibited at the British Empire Exhibition in 1924.¹¹⁹ Work was plentiful in the 1920s when a three-year apprenticeship cost £150 and men could work till 9 p.m. in summer. The Cyril, now Rupert, Street range was rebuilt and some of the company's c. 30 houses on the street were demolished to extend the factory.¹²⁰ The factory had its own sports ground at Hope Corner Lane accommodating its two cricket and two football teams. There were regular outings and social events. They manufactured train lighting systems and motor accessories and paid £2 a year for windows overlooking the railway.¹²¹ By the 1930s their direct current equipment was in less demand as more buildings were supplied with alternating current from the mains and they went into liquidation in 1933. Joseph Lucas bought the business but in 1934 the factory was working only three days a week and closed.¹²²

¹¹⁵ SHC, DD/DP/3/8.

¹¹⁶ SHC, A/BKK/1/6; A/DBF/3—4; D/B/ta/24/1/30/64.

¹¹⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/48/747.

¹¹⁸ SHC, PAM 1428 Focus (1998), 4—5.

¹¹⁹ SHC, A/DBF/2—3.

¹²⁰ SHC, A/BKK/1/6; A/DIF/116; D/B/ta/13/1/1, pp. 305, 308—9.

¹²¹ SHC, A/BKK/1/6; D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 390; A/DBF/7.

¹²² SHC, PAM 1428 Focus (1998), 4—5.

The factory remained empty until 1937 when it was taken over by H.C.M. Stevens for an optical engineering company for aviation and motoring hence naming the firm Avimo. In 1940 the company bought out the interests of Joseph Lucas. During the Second World War in addition to aeronautical and optical instruments the firm made Spitfire tail sections and patented a flexible coupling for tanks and aero engines producing 17 million. Many women were employed in the press and plating shops and some continued to work there long after the war as well as in optical glass production.¹²³ In the 1950s the works employed 270 including 50 women producing precision equipment for aeroplanes and vending machines. Most workers were on piece work and there were separate canteens for manual workers and office staff.¹²⁴ By 1961 Avimo were producing sink disposal and refrigerator units and camera drawing boards. They employed 250 but had difficulty getting skilled tradesmen.¹²⁵ Later in the 1960s they started designing and fitting engine room consoles for ships including oil tankers and *HMS Sheffield*, lost in the Falklands war, specialist cameras, an astronomical telescope and prototype rotary mowers, electronic typewriters and self-assembly fridges. In 1966 they became a public company but in 1971 became part of the United Scientific Holdings Group.¹²⁶ They opened an optical factory at Lisieux Way, built in two blocks between 1967 and 1970,¹²⁷ and in 1976 considered a major refurbishment of the old factory.¹²⁸ However, after a very successful period by the late 1980s business was declining and the Rowbarton factory closed in 1992 and the site was cleared for housing.¹²⁹ By then Avimo specialised in infra-red cameras and thermal imaging and in 2000 the firm was taken over by Thomson-CSF and in 2008 by Thales Group who named the company Thales

¹²³ SHC, PAM 1428 *Focus* (1998), 2, 4—5, 8—10.

¹²⁴ SHC, D/P/wilt/23/41; PAM 1428 *Focus* (1998), 18.

¹²⁵ SHC, A/AWT/1.

¹²⁶ SHC, PAM 1428 *Focus* (1998), 8, 16—20, 22.

¹²⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/190/10924.

¹²⁸ SHC, A/CZH, box 1, Avimo file.

¹²⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 367 SHC, PAM 1428 *Focus* (1998), 1, 14.

Optronics (Taunton) Ltd.¹³⁰ The Lisieux Way buildings were taken over by Cambridge Technology and South West Pathology.

Jarvis and Everard took over a clothing factory in Victoria Gate in 1920 as armature winders and electrical engineers before moving to Kingston Road in the 1950s where they remained until 1972 or later.¹³¹ By 1983 they had moved to Venture Way, Priorswood where they employed more than 20 people in supply rather than manufacture although they rewound coils and repaired motors.¹³² Gaskell and Garraway were electrical engineers at North Town wharf in the 1920s.¹³³ By the late 1960s Standard Telephone and Cables, later ITT, had a factory on Priorswood Road making thermistors. In 1983 they were employing over 100 people and shortly afterwards the factory was taken over by Amphemol Thermometrics (UK) Limited sensor and connector manufacturers.¹³⁴ In 1978 1,024 people in the Taunton area worked in instrument making and electrical engineering, the second largest employer in the manufacturing sector.¹³⁵ Other small engineering firms recorded in the 20th century were installers rather than manufactures and specialised in electrical, heating, refrigeration and commercial equipment.¹³⁶

Vehicle Building

Taunton appears to have had specialised wheelwrights in the middle ages who not only supplied cartwheels to Taunton Castle in the 1249s but between 1302 and 1325 supplied at least 12 pairs of cartwheels for Exeter Cathedral.¹³⁷ Several wheelwrights were recorded from

¹³⁰ gracesguide.co.uk/Avimo: accessed 13 Aug. 2018.

¹³¹ *Taunton Courier*, 30 Sep. 1931, 26 Jul. 1947: BNA accessed 25 May 2021; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 76; (1972—3), 368.

¹³² *Som. Business Dir.* (1983), 37.

¹³³ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 8.

¹³⁴ SHC, A/APN/2/6; *Som. Business Dir.* (1985), 37.

¹³⁵ SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 20.

¹³⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 361—5, (1972—3), 368.

¹³⁷ SHC, T/PH/win 1246—7, 1248—9; *Exeter Cathedral Fabric Accounts* (Devon and Cornwall Rec. Soc. 1981), 21, 30—1, 56, 65, 74, 116, 150, 162, 165.

1730s including the Browning family¹³⁸ and five were on the electoral register in 1820.¹³⁹ In 1841 18 wheelwrights were recorded and private carriages and delivery vehicles still kept 11 in business in 1891.¹⁴⁰ Carriage building was an important industry in Taunton and several carriage makers were at work by the late 18th century.¹⁴¹ In 1861 the industry employed 62 coach makers, painters and trimmers but also provided work for wheelwrights, seamstresses and upholsteresses.¹⁴² As late as 1901 with motor vehicles on the horizon 36 carriage builders and 20 wheelwrights were recorded falling to 27 and 10 by 1911.¹⁴³ Employment in vehicle manufacture rose from 146 in 1929 to 375 in 1939. War work including building aircraft parts at Avimo raised that number to 915 in 1943.¹⁴⁴

The oldest carriage works still in business in 1890 was that established by the Reeves family in 1758 and run by several generations of the family until the 1850s.¹⁴⁵ By 1792 they were in premises west of North Street.¹⁴⁶ They were succeeded c. 1859 by William Channing and in 1877 by Charles Fuge who designed several carriages including the Ina landaulette and whose carriages were exported to New Zealand in 1890. In addition to the showroom and workshops in North Street under the castle wall there were repair shops in Mill Lane.¹⁴⁷ Fuge also had workshops in St James Street west of the church and was still at work in 1911. The repair shops in Mill Lane were used by George Laverock's Taunton Motor Radiator Works until 1931 or later.¹⁴⁸

¹³⁸ Wilts and Swindon HC, 212B/2547; TNA, IR1/24, p. 159; IR1/26, p. 75.

¹³⁹ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/29.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, HO 107/972; RG12/1875—7.

¹⁴¹ SHC, DD/HC/6/1/1; Q/REI/35/24.

¹⁴² TNA, RG9/1617—18.

¹⁴³ TNA, RG13/2276—8; RG14/14234—40, 14242—5, 14247, 14249.

¹⁴⁴ SHC, D/DC/tau.d: T. Sharp, *A Plan for Taunton*, 16.

¹⁴⁵ SHC, DD/HC/6/1/1; TNA, IR1/58, p. 73; HO 107/972, 1922—3; SHC, DD/SP/298 (1841); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 49.

¹⁴⁶ SHC, Q/REI/35/24.

¹⁴⁷ Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); TNA, RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7; *Som. Co. Gaz.* 23 June 1877; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883, 1906); *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 49.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, RG14/14234—40, 14242—5, 14247, 14249; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914—31).

In East Street James Jacobs, in partnership with Samuel Bale until 1807,¹⁴⁹ designed and built lightweight stage coaches and let them out to several west-country coaching firms. In the 1850s John Standfast who had started carriage building in St James's Street took over the East Street works from George Jacobs. When the railways killed off the stage coach business he concentrated on private carriage building with a large showroom, warehouse and factory on a long burgage plot next to the Phoenix inn. His son took over in the 1880s building broughams, landaus, phaetons and dog carts, taking old vehicles in part exchange until 1906. He owned, and his predecessors may have built, the sheriff's coach, which he donated to the castle museum in 1909.¹⁵⁰

Coachbuilder George Hewlet at work from 1770 or earlier had premises west of High Street in 1788.¹⁵¹ They were possibly the workshops James Davey let from 1809 to carriage builder Samuel Bale, former partner of James Jacobs. Bale went bankrupt in 1814 when his stock of parts, paint and tools was valued at c. £550 but his debts were c. £1,120 indicating the high costs of carriage building.¹⁵² The High Street business was taken over before 1830 by William Odery, by 1849 by the firm of Nash and Godfrey and before 1859 by Benjamin Hill.¹⁵³ It was probably the predecessor of the Upper High Street works run from 1866 by Whateley and Son.¹⁵⁴ By 1883 they had moved to new premises in Haydon Road and as Whateley and Symes added a smithy and showroom in 1885.¹⁵⁵ The carriage shop was used as a polling station in the 1890s.¹⁵⁶ Between 1891 and 1902 Louisa Whateley (d. 1919)

¹⁴⁹ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/6.

¹⁵⁰ *Pigot Dir.* (1842); *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 43; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1906); *PSANHS*, LV (1909), 92.

¹⁵¹ TNA, IR1/57, p. 119; IR1/58, p. 4; IR1/60, p.95; SHC, DD/SAS/C112/18/3.

¹⁵² SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/6; Q/REL/35/24.

¹⁵³ *Pigot Dir.* (1830, 1842); SHC, DD/CH/82/8; *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852). Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861).

¹⁵⁴ *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1866); Morris and Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872).

¹⁵⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883, 1889); SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/19/773.

¹⁵⁶ SHC, DD/SAS/C1540/3—8.

offered a wide range of vehicles built to order as well as repairs and painting.¹⁵⁷ By 1914 the business had passed to Edwin Smith who in 1929 was a charabanc proprietor and undertaker.¹⁵⁸ Frederick John Symes set up on his own with a carriage works at 33 Canon Street including a workshop and smithy by 1901. It was continued by Sidney Symes until 1929 or later.¹⁵⁹

A carriage works was operated in Paul Street in the 1820s and 1830s by Leonard Pavey (d. 1831) followed by Robert Brice but was a vestry hall by 1862.¹⁶⁰ Coachbuilder Richard Gibbings leased workshops in East Street in 1851.¹⁶¹ After 1882 the site of Henley's almshouses off South Street was used for carriage workshops, later a repair garage and now Inkerman Court.¹⁶² Alexander Paulding was a carriage builder in Albemarle Road in the late 1890s. By 1907 it was Thomas Radford's coach painting workshop converted to a motor garage by 1914.¹⁶³ Frederick Style had a coach building business in Staplegrove Road between 1900 and 1902 but had given it up by 1911.¹⁶⁴

Bicycle use was increasing by 1878 when the council ordered that they were all to have bells and lights.¹⁶⁵ James Beach began making his Eclipse bicycles c. 1875 in North Town. By 1890 he had a large workshop in East Reach making and selling bicycles and tricycles and an electro-plating business.¹⁶⁶ Ironmonger John Burland patented a 'back action power treadle' for tricycles before 1883 when a cycle maker was established in Bridge Street.

¹⁵⁷ TNA, RG12/1877; *Taunton and West Somerset Annual 1897* (Taunton, 1896), 112; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1899); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1902—3), 191; Nat. Prob. Reg.

¹⁵⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914, 1931); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 46.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, IR 58/825601 (884); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 11.

¹⁶⁰ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830, 1842); TNA, PROB11/1787/16; SHC, DD/HC/85/12/55; below, rel. hist.

¹⁶¹ SHC, DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 55; DD/DP/69/10.

¹⁶² TNA, RG 11/2366; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/16/600; D/B/ta/3/9/1 (1882).

¹⁶³ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1897—9); TNA, IR 58/82613 (2069); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

¹⁶⁴ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1900), 76; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1903--3), 203.; TNA, RG14/14707/154.

¹⁶⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/3/9/1 (1878).

¹⁶⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883); *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 45; TNA, RG12/1875.

Another worked in Church Square by 1901.¹⁶⁷ In 1906 and 1914 there were bicycle builders in Greenway and Station Roads but Beach had moved to St James Street as a motor engineer.¹⁶⁸ Before 1902 Benjamin Dening established the Taunton Cycle Company at 58 East Street but gave it up c. 1914 to concentrate on his motor company.¹⁶⁹ In 1953 Charles Dye and Company, motor cycle manufacturers, leased a former carrier's yard in Paul Street.¹⁷⁰

The first steam motor car was said to have been brought to Taunton c. 1896 by the sons of cycle manufacturer James Beach but there were already published regulations for motor traffic including a 12 m.p.h. speed limit.¹⁷¹ James Beach and Sons ran the Pioneer Motor Car and Engineering Works in St James Street opposite the church and by 1900 were building petrol-burning steam cars and by c. 1911 aeroplanes.¹⁷² They moved to Greenway Road before 1923 and later to Portman Street and appear to have become repairers only.¹⁷³ In 1911 44 motor vehicle workers were recorded in Taunton and by 1914 firms like Allen's and Marshalsea Brothers were maintaining and assembling motor cars.¹⁷⁴ Allen's built cars using de Dion engines and traditional carriage bodies from 1906 but after the war seem to have concentrated on tractors.¹⁷⁵ Marshalsea Brothers had a carriage works in East Street adjoining Standfast's but in 1912 they opened a large motor garage with a corner showroom and workshops along the west side of Billet Street and built Taunton's first motor bus in 1913.¹⁷⁶ Easton and Johnson supplied Marshalseas with parts including cylinders for an Adler car in

¹⁶⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883); TNA, RG13/2276.

¹⁶⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1906, 1914); below, this section.

¹⁶⁹ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1903—3), 184; SHC, DD/CH/128/2 (billheads).

¹⁷⁰ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/15 (1200).

¹⁷¹ SHC, A/DIF/101/5/93—101; *Taunton and West Somerset Annual 1897*(Taunton, 1896), 128.

¹⁷² *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); SHC, A/BWS/3; *Taunton Courier*, 3 Sep. 1938: BNA, accessed 7 July 2021.

¹⁷³ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1923, 1831); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton.* (1929), 67.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, RG14/14234—40, 14242—5, 14247, 14249; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

¹⁷⁵ N. Chipchase, *Taunton Revisited* (Stroud, 1998), 54. *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1923).

¹⁷⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/35/337; 24/1/44/625; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); SHC, A/DIF/101/5/102.

1916.¹⁷⁷ Marshalseas later built workshops in Wellington Road and continued coachbuilding for motor vehicles until the 1950s.¹⁷⁸

The Taunton Motor Company under Benjamin Dening occupied the former Standfast carriage works in East Reach from 1906.¹⁷⁹ They also built cars in the 1920s in the garage in Priory Avenue but they sold it in 1926 with trimming, painting and smith's shops.¹⁸⁰ In 1928 its East Street works, which expanded into the former Marshalsea works, were the most highly rated manufacturing premises in the town. They later moved to Priory Bridge Road where they remained as car dealers until the early 21st century.¹⁸¹ Atherden and Sons were motor car body builders in Church Square north of the Central school from 1925 to 1957 or later and made car hoods, trim and upholstery.¹⁸² Their two-storey brick building, the bays divided by pilasters, survives as offices.¹⁸³ A car number plate manufacturer was in business in Middle Street in 1957 but cars were no longer assembled in Taunton.¹⁸⁴ The Somerset Motor Company in Corporation Street, founded in 1927, Vickery's begun in Silver Street in 1927 and later a car showroom, the Spittlegate Garage in East Reach by 1931 and Hedges Ltd in Station Road were dealers acting for large manufacturers.¹⁸⁵

The Great Western Railway had engineering works west of the station.¹⁸⁶ As carriage and wagon works they remained in use until the 1980s.¹⁸⁷ A railway wagon builder had workshops at the corner of Chip Lane and Staplegrove Road in the 1950s.¹⁸⁸

¹⁷⁷ SHC, A/CIC/2 (1916).

¹⁷⁸ Bishops Hull, econ. hist.

¹⁷⁹ SHC, A/DIF/101/5/103; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

¹⁸⁰ *Taunton Courier*, 19 Nov. 1924; 10 Mar. 1926; BNA, accessed 16 Aug. 2021.

¹⁸¹ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1923).

¹⁸² *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1931); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 84, , 354, 392.

¹⁸³ SHC, DD/HWN/11.

¹⁸⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 84, 88, 288, 291, 354, 389—91.

¹⁸⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/13/3/1, pp. 385—6; DD/AY/331; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 83, *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1931); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 88, 288, 291, 354, 389—91.

¹⁸⁶ OS Map 1:500, SOM. LXX.12.2 (1888).

¹⁸⁷ SHC, A/BQG/2.

¹⁸⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 124.

Wood and Building Trades

As well as house building, church repair and maintaining market stalls, maintenance of the castle provided work for a great many carpenters, masons and helliers in the Middle Ages.¹⁸⁹ Less common trades were a fletcher in 1302 and bowyers in 1458, 1489 and 1583.¹⁹⁰ Cabinet makers were recorded from 1721 and one went bankrupt in 1748.¹⁹¹ Coopers were also at work in the 18th century and the George inn had its own cooperage.¹⁹² The 1774 poll included 20 woodworkers, mainly joiners but also coopers and cabinet makers.¹⁹³ In a poll book of 1820 the 48 carpenters dominated woodworkers compared with 23 cabinet makers, nine sawyers, eight coopers, and four turners.¹⁹⁴ In 1831 there were 95 carpenters and 28 cabinet makers in St Mary's alone.¹⁹⁵ There were said to have been sawpits in the Westgate area in the early 19th century.¹⁹⁶

Furniture making was an important industry throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries with 11 businesses in 1830, employing over 100 people by 1891 including French polishers and upholsterers, and up to 140 people in 1911.¹⁹⁷ Changes in fashion saw the disappearance of Japanners by the mid 19th century while the number of carvers and gilders rose and from the 1870s upholsterers, mainly woman, increased to a peak of 43 in 1891 although some would also have worked for carriage builders. Some firms specialised in

¹⁸⁹ Bishops Hull, land.; below, this section, market.

¹⁹⁰ SHC, T/PH/win 1301—2; TNA, CP40/788, image 1791; 907, image 1262: www.waalt.uh.edu/index.php/CP40 accessed May 2021; Siraut, *Som. Wills*, 263. Possibly oxbow rather than longbow makers.

¹⁹¹ TNA, IR1/47, p. 76; IR1/55, p. 90; IR1/58, pp. 73, 164; SHC, DD/DP/76/2; DD/L/1/25/9/8; DD/SP/319/193; D/P/tau.m/13/3/5; DD/CH/69/3 (1794); London Metropolitan Archives, MSS. 11936/377/583630.

¹⁹² SHC, DD/SAS/C238/2/3 (1703); D/P/tau.m/13/3/5 (1754); D/DC/tau.d/25/19; TNA, IR1/58, p. 4; IR1/60, p. 95; London Metropolitan Archives, MSS. 11936/367/567851.

¹⁹³ SHC, DD/HC/6/1/1.

¹⁹⁴ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/29.

¹⁹⁵ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/16.

¹⁹⁶ Goldsworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton*, 4.

¹⁹⁷ *Pigot Dir.* (1830); TNA, RG12/1875—7; RG14/14234—40, 14242—5, 14247, 14249.

looking glasses or picture frames.¹⁹⁸ An upholsterer took a paying apprentice in 1728 and an upholstery firm another in 1803.¹⁹⁹ A former silk factory in Canon Street was a cabinet-making workshop from 1810 to c. 1840.²⁰⁰ Two cabinet makers' workshops stood together in St James Street west of the almshouses in the later 19th century, one held for c. 80 years by the Webber family had possibly been a serge workshop.²⁰¹ The major cabinet makers were the Steevens family whose businesses were at Bridge Street and East Street where showrooms and workshops extended up the east side of Billet Street by the later 19th century.²⁰² John Steevens started the business in 1836. His Taunton Cabinet incorporating embroidery was exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851 and his richly-carved Taunton Sideboard was made for the International Exhibition in 1862.²⁰³ His son Arthur extended the business as A. Steevens and Company manufacturing decorative and art furniture in the 1880s. By 1910 the business was mainly retail and removals but still included cabinet, polishing and upholstery workshops.²⁰⁴

Hatchers produced their own furniture and had a large store and workshops on the corner of the Parade and through 13—18 Hammet Street in the 1880s and Mr Crosse had furniture workshops in a former foundry at 15 Bridge Street.²⁰⁵ W. and A. Chapman not only had an extensive department store in North Street but a cabinet and bedding factory in St James's Street, used as showrooms by 1910 and converted in the late 20th century into a small courtyard of shops and other businesses. Chapmans also manufactured tents and

¹⁹⁸ SHC, A/DLR/1/1; *Pigot Dir.* (1842); *Morris and Co. Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

¹⁹⁹ TNA, IR1/49, p. 2; IR1/71, p. 61.

²⁰⁰ SHC, DD/SP/416.

²⁰¹ SHC, DD/KIT/8/12; DD/SP/416 (1712—84).

²⁰² Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); *Morris and Co. Dir. Som.* (1872).

²⁰³ *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 18; SHC, T/PH/rea/3/150. The cabinet is in the Museum of Somerset, Taunton.

²⁰⁴ SHC, A/CZV/7/3/1; A/DIF/101/1/20; TNA, IR 58/82642 (1145).

²⁰⁵ *Goodman Dir. Taunton* (1887), x; OS Map 1:500, SOM. LXX. 12.17 (1888); *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 29.

marquees for sale or rent in a workshop over their store.²⁰⁶ The Crescent Works factory and workshop of Lawrence and Thompson cabinet makers at 41—2 Upper High Street was enlarged substantially in 1870 providing two front shops, two workshops and 12 showrooms. In 1878 additional upholstery workshops, packing room and offices were added.²⁰⁷ They also expanded into the upper floors of the former Mary Street brewery in 1885.²⁰⁸ Like Steevens and Company they had become mainly retailers and removers by 1900 with shops in Bridge and Hammet Streets selling carpets and antiques.²⁰⁹ The Crescent building was primarily retail by 1894 and was void by 1910.²¹⁰ It was acquired by McIntyre, Hogg and Company of Pool Wall Mills as a workshop but closed in the early 1930s and by the 1940s became council offices.²¹¹ A sprung mattress maker worked in Foundry Road in 1957.²¹²

Other woodworkers comprised carpenters, joiners, sawyers, turners, coopers and wheelwrights; usually well over 200 during the later 19th century with carpenters accounting for at least three quarters of the group. Machine sawyers recorded in the later 19th century were presumably employed at one of the sawmills. A joinery in Station Road made green and summer houses and artificial limbs in 1864. A steam joinery in Alma Street in the 1880s produced poultry houses, incubators and horticultural buildings.²¹³ Four cooperages were recorded in 1864 probably serving the many local breweries.²¹⁴ Other specialist woodworkers included basket, brush, fishing rod, trunk and umbrella makers. In the 1800s a Taunton basketmaker bought withies in North Petherton for up to 1s. 6d. a bundle and two took apprentices in 1806.²¹⁵ Between the 1820s and 1841 women were engaged in basketmaking

²⁰⁶ *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 239.; TNA, IR 58/82604 (1124).

²⁰⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/12/440.

²⁰⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/19/781.

²⁰⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889), *Goodmans Dir. Taunton* (1900), 70.

²¹⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/7/217; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1894, 1906); TNA, IR 58/82640 (966—7).

²¹¹ SHC, D/B/ta/13/3/1, p. 385; D/B/ta/24/1/111/3978.

²¹² *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957).

²¹³ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/21/877; *Goodmans Dir. Taunton* (1864), 76; *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 44.

²¹⁴ *Goodmans Dir. Taunton* (1864), 81.

²¹⁵ M. Siraut, 'A farming account book', *PSANHS CXXIX* (1985), 167; TNA. IR1/72, pp. 38, 67.

but as with other trades were excluded later in the century.²¹⁶ Brush makers and basket makers marched in the 1832 Reform festival procession.²¹⁷ The Hector family of basketmakers and cane workers were at work in East Reach and St James's Street in 1883.²¹⁸ From 1908 to 1919 Messrs Wallbutton and Voysey had a basketmaking workshop at 59a East Reach.²¹⁹ Baskets were still made in Taunton in 1961.²²⁰ A firm of brushmakers begun in 1870 was in business in East Street in 1929 and others were recorded in Station Road in 1906 and Silver Street in 1931.²²¹ In the early 21st century cricket bats were made in a small workshop producing about 2,500 a year.²²²

There were two boat builders on the river near Obridge in 1841 and Allens and Kellands foundries made boats later in the century.²²³ Two men were building or repairing boats in 1929 but boat building was not recorded again until the later 20th century when Crescent Boats were based at Haydon Terrace and there were marine engineers in Priory Bridge Road.²²⁴

Two timberyards were recorded in the 1790s, one on Cole Green near the Crescent.²²⁵ In the early 19th century Richard Ball and Company were timber merchants at Bridgwater wharf in North Town and were succeeded by Edward Bagehot.²²⁶ Building and furniture-making created trade for five timber merchants in the 1850s and by 1871 10 men were

²¹⁶ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

²¹⁷ *Pigot Dir.* (1830); *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); SHC, DD/SAS/C2402/52.

²¹⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883).

²¹⁹ TNA, IR 58/82599 (689).

²²⁰ SHC, A/AWT/1.

²²¹ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1906); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 29; *Taunton Official Handbook and Guide* (1931), 62.

²²² *Society*, June 2013, 31.

²²³ TNA, HO 107/972; above, this section.

²²⁴ SHC, D/DC/tau.d: T. Sharp, *A Plan for Taunton*, 16; A/APN/2/6; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 401.

²²⁵ SHC, DD/SP/178.

²²⁶ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852).

engaged in the timber trade.²²⁷ The firm of Bagehot was succeeded in the 1850s by Colthurst, Small and Company which specialised in mahogany, timber, deal and slate but also shipped pipes and bricks from its yards in Bridgwater.²²⁸ Water transport probably accounted for the number of sawmills on the north bank of the river near the Tone Bridge. East of the bridge behind North Town Wharf was the North Town Saw Mill, steam-operated in 1877.²²⁹ A second sawmill was built in 1906. By the 1930s the rough timber came by road but the riverside site was operated until the later 20th century by Colthurst and Company.²³⁰ West of the bridge there were two sawmills. George Pollard moved across the river from Tangier Wharf after 1852 and may have taken the Longs' stoneyard on Bridge Street.²³¹ By 1862 he had acquired part of Dyers Green off Wood Street and cut a long basin from the river, fed by a stream south of Staplegrove Road, to deliver heavy materials. The cut has been long since filled in and after 1872 the Long's yard became part of Allen's foundry.²³² The great flood of 1889 caused a boiler explosion at Pollard's and much of the site was destroyed in the fire but was rebuilt almost immediately.²³³ In 1903 the site comprised sawmill, cement drying house, smithy, engine and boiler house, saw sharpening house, woodturning shop and wheelwright's shop all under one roof, joiners workshop, paint shop, carhouse and stable, stores and mortar house. The company sold the site in 1910 with business, machinery and new buildings.²³⁴ Thomas Penny who had been Pollard's manager in 1866 purchased the adjoining east part of Dyers Green c. 1876 and established the Tone Bridge Timber Yard with sawmill, which he held until 1916.²³⁵ The yard remained in use, partly rebuilt in 1963 for storage and joinery

²²⁷ *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); TNA, RG10/2370—2, 2374—5.

²²⁸ Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); SHC, D/P/stagp/4/1/6.

²²⁹ SHC, DD/S/EW/1—2; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883).

²³⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/35/337; A/DIF/60; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 265, 349.

²³¹ *Slaters Dir. Som.* (1852); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); ; Morris and Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872).

²³² SHC, DD/CWC.ta/uncat, box 1 (1862); A/ADR, box 2; Morris and Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872).

²³³ SHC, T/PH/rea, sheet 110; D/B/ta/24/1/23/981.

²³⁴ SHC, A/ADR, box 4; TNA, IR 58/82610 (1744).

²³⁵ *PO Dir. Som.* (1866); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883); *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 39; SHC, DD/CH/22; A/ADR, box 4; A/DIF/114/19.

manufacture, as Penny and Reeves, later Reeves, until the later 20th century when it was cleared for retail development. Penny also had a timberyard in East Reach, bought from builder Robert Herniman, which had a sawmill in the 1920s.²³⁶ By the 1950s sawmills were electrically driven.²³⁷ Timberyards remained along the river until the late 20th century when the river banks were redeveloped for retailing and car parking.

Taunton provided many skilled building workers from at least the 1200s.²³⁸ In 1460 a Taunton builder repaired and whitewashed North Curry church.²³⁹ In 1555 a plasterman and a carver, both unnamed, held burgages.²⁴⁰ Artist Tristram Howe painted the king's arms and the lord's prayer in Pawlett church and sued for nearly 30s. owed for the work in 1620.²⁴¹ Builders appear to have dug sawpits adjoining the building they were working and laid timber and stone in the street to the danger of passers by in the early 17th century.²⁴² Later Castle Green was used for storing building materials.²⁴³ In the early 17th century cob walling was still being constructed, measured by the rope.²⁴⁴ In the early 18th century many helliers were at work and some at least appear to have been general builders or at least employed a variety of workers who could build wells and lean out privy pits as well as tiling roofs. Some carpenters also appear to have been building contractors.²⁴⁵

During the 19th century there were usually c. 25 builders including large firms like those of Henry Davis, who was also a skilled stone carver building his own house in Billetfield and a large number of Somerset churches and schools, Edward Jeboult and Henry Spiller who employed between 20 and 70 workers. Building work usually employed up to

²³⁶ SHC, D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 275, D/B/ta/24/1/150/9151.

²³⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 423.

²³⁸ SHC, T/PH/win passim.

²³⁹ Dunning and McDermott, *Church Accounts 1457—1559* (Som. Rec. Soc. 95), 17.

²⁴⁰ SHC, T/PH/hps/1.

²⁴¹ SHC, DD/SP/63 (1620).

²⁴² SHC, DD/SP/49 (Oct. 1606), 50 (Apr. 1615), 53 (Oct. 1643).

²⁴³ Bishops Hull.

²⁴⁴ SHC, DD/SP/63 (1620).

²⁴⁵ SHC, DD/SP/418—19.

410 men mostly masons but as the century progressed the numbers of bricklayers drew level with masons and thatchers virtually disappeared. Other building workers included plasterers, glaziers, plumbers and painters and an increasing number of bellhangers and gas fitters. By the end of the 19th century they were joined by electricians and sanitary engineers and by 1911 over 700 men were building workers. Painters were the largest group but often combined that trade with plumbing or glazing although there were some specialists including William and Alfred Stansell. Alfred decorated the entire interior of Holy Trinity, Pontgarthi, Carm. c. 1870.²⁴⁶ William came from London to Taunton in 1814 and established the firm of Stansell and Son church and house decorators in 1823. In the 20th century they became general builders with premises in Billet Street in 1972.²⁴⁷ During the Second World War Stansell's built the Stop Line of pillboxes from Ilminster via Taunton to Bridgwater and several local military camps. In 1961 the company moved to South Street, which became home to their joinery workshops, and in 1973 acquired Tauntfield, South Road restoring the house and building offices in the grounds. The company gradually took over other companies and went into partnership with Wells Cathedral after working on its west front. By 1990 it was a group of 11 companies employing c. 1,000 people. The company built many public and commercial buildings in Taunton including St Teresa's church and the art college on Wellington Road, as well as housing estates. The firm became part of Morgan Sindall c. 1996.²⁴⁸

Thomas Norman was responsible for building the market as well as developing King Street with its two-up two-down houses in the 1820s.²⁴⁹ Samuel Shewbrooks helped to develop the Victoria Street area c. 1839 and with his son William built the terraced houses at

²⁴⁶ TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7; RG14/14234—40, 14242—5, 14247, 14249; P. Wakelin and R.A. Griffiths, *Hidden Histories: Discovering the Heritage of Wales* (Aberystwyth, 2005), 224—5.

²⁴⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 373.

²⁴⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/214/11311; PAM 1100, 1222.

²⁴⁹ Above, intro.

Tangier, Bishops Hull.²⁵⁰ William bought George Herniman's unfinished development on East Reach when the latter went bankrupt in 1843.²⁵¹ He also worked with architect Edward Ashworth to create the Wellington Road cemetery and his son Samuel who built the Temple Methodist church.²⁵² William Webber built terraces at Union Place in the 1820s and was followed by the son George who built Blake and Noble streets and also the chancel of St James' church for Edmund Ferrey.²⁵³ There were two Spiller family building firms founded by John and Alfred Spiller respectively. Four generations of John's family were builders building St George's catholic church, Huish's almshouses, King's College, St James' vicarage, the electricity generating works, housing in Rowbarton, several rural churches and the Lyceum cinema. They had a yard in Bridge Street.²⁵⁴ Alfred Spiller, who was twice Mayor, developed and owned several back courts and the Cherry Grove estate, Rowbarton. He established a yard in Canon Street where he built the mallings.²⁵⁵ Thomas Moggridge and Sons of Queen Street and later of East Reach built the public library, art college and technical institute in Corporation Street and employed 80 men in the 1920s.²⁵⁶

In addition to the timber and stone business George Pollard (d. 1838), his son George (d. 1869) and grandson George Heudebourk Pollard (d. 1924) were builders and the elder George's son Samuel was an architect. By 1844 the firm had extensive workshops off High Street adjoining Pool Wall mills. They undertook several large contracts including the Highbridge carriage works for the Somerset Central Railway and in the 1860s, the Wells lunatic asylum and the Carmarthen Asylum, later St David's Hospital, worth £25,000 as well

²⁵⁰ SHC, DD/HS/1; DD/SP/215, 219; Bishops Hill, intro.

²⁵¹ SHC, DD/CH/118/3.

²⁵² VCH Office, Taunton, R. Lillford, 'A Biographical Dictionary of Somerset Architects and Surveyors' (2022), 22; SHC, D/N/tmc/4/2/27, p. 46; Bishops Hill, local govt.

²⁵³ SHC, DD/CH/110/11; D/DC/ta.d/25/18; D/B/ta/24/1/20/800.

²⁵⁴ *Taunton of Today* (1896), xxviii; SHC, D/P/b.hl/23/7; DD/DP/201/1; D/B/ta/24/1/3/100; VCH Office, Taunton, Lillford, 'Biog. Dict. Som. Architects and Surveyors', 505—7..

²⁵⁵ SHC, DD/IR/T/26/1, nos 5, 33—4; D/B/ta/24/1/18/711; VCH Office, Taunton, Lillford, 'Biog. Dict. Som. Architects and Surveyors', 504.

²⁵⁶ VCH Office, Taunton, Lillford, 'Biog. Dict. Som. Architects and Surveyors', 364.

as work on the military buildings at Brean Down and temporary showgrounds. In the 1890s Pollards undertook work for the Great Western Railway as did Henry Philips and Son.²⁵⁷ In 1902 the firm became a limited company as builders, timber merchants, steam sawyers, marble and stone workers and importers of building materials.²⁵⁸ G. H. Pollard left Taunton in 1920 but the firm of George Pollard and Company remained at Wood Street until the later 20th century.²⁵⁹ Similarly timber and builders merchants Thomas Penny (d. 1906) and his son Thomas Stubbs Penny (d. 1944) were developers and builders not only of many terraced streets at Rowbarton but of Italianate villas on the Trull Road where they lived next door to each other.²⁶⁰ From the 1870s William Potter established a firm of builders and joiners, which was based at Watcombe House, Railway Street from the 1880s and employed up to 70 men in the 1950s.²⁶¹ Before 1910 Fred Tottle (d. 1940) began the business of F. Tottle and Son based in substantial premises on the corner of Leslie Avenue, Rowbarton.²⁶²

Other builders built, owned and maintained the back courts as late as the 1920s often from a yard close by, men like Jas Yarde Coles of Portland Cottage off Upper High Street where he had 38 cottages in adjoining courts and at least 30 others around the town.²⁶³ In 1939 over 2,800 people were employed in building, a figure which fell to c. 700 during the war.²⁶⁴ In the later 20th century Stodgells had offices in Middle Street and later in Bindon Road and Woolaways of Taunton built bungalows for both private and council clients

²⁵⁷ *Taunton Courier* 17 July 1844: BNA accessed 12 May 2022; SHC, A/ADR, volume 1; box 2; Morris and Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA, RAIL 252/1036, 1081.

²⁵⁸ SHC, A/ADR, box 3.

²⁵⁹ SHC, A/ADR, box 4; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 282.

²⁶⁰ Above, intro.; Wilton, intro.; TNA, RG13/2273, nos 62—3.

²⁶¹ SHC, DD/CH/30; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1894—9); SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/35/337; D/P/wilt/23/41.

²⁶² *Taunton Courier*, 14 Sep. 1940: BNA accessed 19 July 2022; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1939); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 80.

²⁶³ SHC, D/DC/tau,d/25/7 (806).

²⁶⁴ SHC, D/DC/tau.d: T. Sharp, *A Plan for Taunton*, 16.

throughout the south of England.²⁶⁵ After the war national builders were more prominent but in 1972 there were at least 21 firms of builders based in Taunton.²⁶⁶

There were a number of marble masons and stone carvers producing statuary and headstones in the 19th century.²⁶⁷ In 1774 Mark Long was a tiler, plasterer and stone cutter and in the 1790s his son, also Mark, had a marble stone cutting yard north-west of Tone Bridge, which before 1831 passed to his son also Mark (d. 1838) and the latter's widow Maria who held an adjoining wharf and timberyard. She was assisted by her brother-in-law Robert Long (d. 1868) until shortly after 1851 when she gave it up to Pollards who later moved to larger premises in Wood Street.²⁶⁸ John Long, possibly a relation, began in Paul Street but by the 1830s had moved north of King Street where he had stone cutting shops in 1842 and his brother Charles set up as a marble mason in Canon Street.²⁶⁹ Builder and developer Edward Jeboult had a marble works in North Street by 1861 but in 1875 built a large glass-fronted shop for his West of England Marble and Building Establishment in Station Road.²⁷⁰ By 1872 there were four firms besides Pollards mainly creating graveyard memorials but also chimneypieces, washstands and counter tops.²⁷¹ Four firms were in business in the later 20th century.²⁷²

Brickmaking

There were important yards south of Taunton because of the presence of Keuper marl in the area. Newly-burnt brick on farms worth £60 in 1635 and £40 in 1682 had possibly been

²⁶⁵ SHC, A/CPB/1; *Glos. RO*, K/46/161, K/786/20.

²⁶⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 371—4.

²⁶⁷ TNA, HO 107/1922—3; RG9/1617—18.

²⁶⁸ SHC, DD/HC/6/1/1; *Univ. Brit. Dir.* [1796—8]; *Pigot, London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Robsons Dir. Som.* (1839); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); *Slaters Dir. Som.* (1852); SHC, DD/SP/257 (1831); DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 90; DD/SAS/C795/SX/7.

²⁶⁹ *Pigot, London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830, 1842); SHC, DD/SAS/C212/13/1, pp. 58, 67.

²⁷⁰ *PO Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/10/340; DD/CH/77/1, 81/1, 7; DD/SAS/C909/172.

²⁷¹ *Morris and Co. Dir. Som.* (1872); *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 27, 31—2.

²⁷² *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 386; (1972—3), 403.

made in situ for building work.²⁷³ Houses destroyed in the Civil War had brickwork indicating its earlier use in the town.²⁷⁴ Early brickmakers would have been peripatetic making bricks where they were needed like John Kingston, a Taunton brickmaker, who in 1680 undertook to make 100,000 bricks at Nynehead assisted by his son.²⁷⁵ A clothier supplied bricks in 1686 and some of the Collard family appears to have given up brickmaking for clothmaking by 1716.²⁷⁶ The Collards may have made bricks at the Mount where a brickfield was recorded in 1777 on land formerly the Hurdleditch. The family included a builder, an architect and a bricklayer and John Collard was a brick and tilemaker in 1782.²⁷⁷ In 1741 William Bailey the younger had devised an engine for making bricks and supplied Gray's almshouses, possibly from South Road.²⁷⁸ A mason bought a brickyard in St James parish, on the site of a demolished inn on the corner of Eastgate and Tancred Street, which he occupied between 1745 and 1763, when he absconded having mortgaged the property. The business had been illegal and the site was seized by the owners of Priory manor.²⁷⁹ A brickyard in the Shuttern area closed between 1808 and 1839.²⁸⁰

The two largest brickyards lay side by side in the south-west of the town. The oldest was at Southfield opposite the convent in South Road where William Boon, brick and tile maker, may have worked in 1783 and had 1 ½ a.²⁸¹ In 1812 there was a new kiln later described as 'four-eyed' and it may have been in the yard sold by Samuel Willment in 1816. He was succeeded by John Lackington Rice who also kept the Swan inn and may have employed John Pyne and Thomas Moss as bricks marked 'Moss and Pyne' have been found.

²⁷³ SHC, DD/SP/1635/128; DD/SP/1682/515.

²⁷⁴ SHC, DD/SP/18/20.

²⁷⁵ SHC, DD/SF/5/6/11.

²⁷⁶ TNA, PROB/4/4511; SHC, D/P/tau.ja/13/6/1 (1716).

²⁷⁷ B. J. Murless, Taunton Brickyards', *Journal SIAS* (1981), 33; SHC, DD/AY/16; DD/SP/319/136, 155.

²⁷⁸ TNA, EXT 6/61; Murless, Taunton Brickyards', *Journal SIAS* (1981), 33.

²⁷⁹ Devon HC 3327/A/PO/82/23; SHC, DD/DR/28; DD/HC/16/7/6.

²⁸⁰ SHC, T/P/tau.m/4/3/8; tithe award, St Mary.

²⁸¹ Wilts and Swindon HC 1075/001/395.

John Willment held part of the site. By 1819 the yard had two kilns, tile and drying sheds and had expanded to 7a. An adjoining brickyard and nursery bordering Holway Avenue shared by Henry Buncombe and Thomas Penny between 1811 and 1827 were sold to Rice who kept his yard until 1848.²⁸² He was succeeded by James and Robert Woolridge and from at least 1859 by Spencer Parsons who made bricks, tiles and drainage pipes until he went bankrupt in 1861. Edward Cornish worked the yard in the 1870s. It had ceased working and been cleared by 1888 and in 1898 the site, known as the lower yard, was bought by the convent and from 1977 was a housing estate.²⁸³ The Curry family had a yard on the Bridgwater, now Hamilton Road in West Monkton by 1809, the South Street Brick Works from the 1830s and a yard at Roman Road by 1841.²⁸⁴ George Herniman (d. 1842) had a brick kiln and tile house, probably at South Street, and was succeeded by Samuel Herniman and Robert Herniman who also ran the South Road yard in 1850.²⁸⁵ In the 1880s Samuel Hawkins ran the South Street yard, which may have produced the unusual chimney pots found in East Reach.²⁸⁶ The number of workers employed in the two yards was *c.* 20 but in 1901 only four were recorded.²⁸⁷ The high brickyard in South Street had been abandoned by 1910 and was used later as a refuse tip, allotments and a small industrial estate until 2020—1 when it was cleared to build apartments.²⁸⁸ Small brickyards were probably opened for a short period to supply surrounding building sites such as Frieze Hill from the 1850s and in the 1870s Cherry Grove,

²⁸² SHC, Q/RLa/19/15; Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); B. J. Murless, Taunton Brickyards', *Journal SIAS* (1981), 29, 33; SHC, tithe award, St Mary; DD/CH/77/5, 118/2; 138/1, p. 103.

²⁸³ SHC, D/B/ta/13/1/1; DD/CH/22; Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); TNA, IR 58/82649; Murless, Taunton Brickyards', *Journal SIAS* (1981), 29—30.

²⁸⁴ Murless, Taunton Brickyards', *Journal SIAS* (1981), 34; *inf.* from B. Murless, 2017; Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830, 1842); SHC, D/P/tau.m/13/2/255; tithe award, St Mary's.

²⁸⁵ TNA, PROB11/1966/338; SHC, D/B/ta/13/1/1. Remains of an updraught kiln were found on the site in the 1970: 'Somerset Archaeology', *PSANHS CXXII* (1978), 147.

²⁸⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889); Murless, Taunton Brickyards', *Journal SIAS* (1981), 33; 'Somerset Archaeology', *PSANHS CXXI* (1977), 121.

²⁸⁷ TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG13/2276—8.

²⁸⁸ SHC, D/P/tau.m/34/9/3; TNA, IR 58/82649.

Rowbarton run by the Wilkings family until the area was redeveloped in the 1880s.²⁸⁹ The expansion of house building in the mid 19th century made brick clay an asset when selling land.²⁹⁰

The Great Western Railway extended its site north towards Priorswood Road in 1912 for a ballast field, later connected to the railway lines by several sidings.²⁹¹ In the 1920s the company established a large concrete works there, which remained in use until the late 20th century when the entire site was cleared for a housing estate.²⁹² The Poole family had a small concrete works off Elms Parade in the 1920s making blocks²⁹³ and others were based in Belvedere and Roman roads in the 1960s.²⁹⁴ A ready-mixed concrete plant was established in Pollard's Yard, Priorswood Road in 1964—5 and remains in business.²⁹⁵

Pottery and Glass

Osbert le Potter took on land in the Staplegrove and Millane area, probably Fairwater for his work, presumably clay digging, in 1253—65.²⁹⁶ The surname le Potter was recorded in 1316²⁹⁷ and early 14th-century medieval floor tiles and kiln wasters indicate that there was probably a tile pottery near St James' church presumably for the enlargement of the priory church between 1327 and 1337.²⁹⁸

A Mrs Butcher was a water-closet manufacturer in East Street in 1835 but as the family were plumbers they were presumably building them from parts made elsewhere.²⁹⁹

²⁸⁹ Murless, 'Taunton Brickyards', *Journal SIAS* (1981), 34; SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; D/B/ta/24/1/12/403, 489; TNA, RG10/2374.

²⁹⁰ SHC, T/PH/rea/1/51.

²⁹¹ SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/3 (1912); D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 472—3.

²⁹² SHC, D/B/ta/13/3/1, pp. 405—6; 24/1/106/3138; A/BQG/2.

²⁹³ SHC, D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 353; D/B/ta/13/3/1, p. 314; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 81.

²⁹⁴ SHC, A/APN/2/6; D/B/ta/24/1/164/9851.

²⁹⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/165/9948.

²⁹⁶ SHC, T/PH/win 1553—4, 1256—7, 1264—5. There were Pit Fields there but next to the canal and possibly connected with that: tithe award St James.

²⁹⁷ SHC, A/BFA/4.

²⁹⁸ A.D. Hallam 'Decorated Medieval Tiles from Taunton', *PSANHS* 95 (1950), 63—71; below, rel. hist., priory.

The Cox foundry at Foundry Square had a pottery by 1840³⁰⁰ probably the factory occupied by James Jeboult, glass and chinaman, in 1838—41 and said to have produced redware.³⁰¹ In the mid 19th century there were several Italian plaster image makers and carvers and a potter was recorded in 1881.³⁰² The Pratt family made tobacco pipes in a factory north of East Reach between 1822 and 1859 or later.³⁰³ They employed nine men and women in 1841 and pipe makers, mainly women, were recorded until 1871.³⁰⁴

A bottle maker was recorded in the 1630s.³⁰⁵ Glass painter William Ray (d. 1846) made windows for St Mary's church in 1843 and a glass blower was at work in 1881.³⁰⁶ An art glass workshop with kilns was in business in Foundry Road from the 1990s to the 2010s.³⁰⁷

Paper and Box

Papermakers were recorded from 1710 and paper bag manufacturers between 1859 and 1901.³⁰⁸ The mass production of stiff collars increased demand for cardboard boxes and a new industry sprang up to supply them. In 1890 Walter Ravenhill had a three-storey box factory in Paul Street employing c. 50 hands, mainly women, making cardboard boxes for various traders and also cloth covered boxes and portfolios.³⁰⁹ In 1898 Frank White set up a

²⁹⁹ SHC, DD/DP/9/14 (trade card); *Pigot Dir.* (1830.); *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839).

³⁰⁰ SHC, DD/SAS/C/212/Map/148.

³⁰¹ SHC, D/P/tau.ja/4/3/1, 13/1/8; *Taunton Courier*, 11 Oct. 1865; BNA accessed 21 Sep. 2021.

³⁰² *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922; RG10/2370—2; RG11/2366.

³⁰³ *Pigot London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830, 1842); *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); SHC, D/B/ta/13/1/1; DD/SAS/C/212/13/1, p. 67; *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852). Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859).

³⁰⁴ TNA, HO 107/972, 1922; RG9/1618; RG10/273—4.

³⁰⁵ SHC, Q/SR/66/24, 73/118.

³⁰⁶ VCH Office, Taunton, R. Lillford, 'A Biographical Dictionary of Somerset Architects and Surveyors' (2022), 441; TNA, RG11/2366.

³⁰⁷ *What's On Somerset*, autumn 2013, 21.

³⁰⁸ SHC, D/P/tau.ja 13/5/1; Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); TNA, HO 107/972; RG12/1875; RG13/2276—8.

³⁰⁹ *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 240; TNA, RG12/1875, 1877.

cardboard box factory on the corner of Stephen and Gyffarde Streets, which in 1910 comprised a single storey brick and iron building covering 84,000 square feet housing cutting, printing and store rooms.³¹⁰ Before 1897 furnishers A. Steevens and Company set up a company of the same name but dropping an 'e' to make boxes in Fore Street, moving before 1899 to Silver Street.³¹¹ In 1910 they took over White's box factory, warehouse and printing office in Gyffarde Street known as the Priory Works.³¹² Despite the growth of box-making departments within several factories in the early 20th century independent box-making continued to flourish and employed more than 30 local people in 1911.³¹³ J. Bagg and Company were making cardboard boxes in Mary Street in the 1920s.³¹⁴ By 1922 Stevens also had warehouses in Mary Street and another in Gloucester Street. The Priory Works was destroyed by fire in 1938 putting 30 people out of work but the factory was rebuilt.³¹⁵ By c. 1961 the company made cardboard boxes in part of a collar factory in South Street. The business declined employing only 16 people by the mid 1960s and closing soon afterwards. The Gyffarde Street site was converted for residential use.³¹⁶

Printing and Publishing

In the 19th and 20th centuries printing including book and newspaper production was an important industry in Taunton but originated earlier. Bookseller and publisher George Treagle had his publications printed in London in the late 1640s but by 1708 Henry Chalklin was printing in Taunton and the town had the county's first newspaper press in 1718.³¹⁷ The

³¹⁰ TNA, IR 58/82603 (1090).

³¹¹ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1897, 1899).

³¹² SHC, DD/IR/T/26/1, p. 58; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

³¹³ TNA, RG14/14234—40, 14242—5, 14247, 14249.

³¹⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 57.

³¹⁵ SHC, D/R/ta/34/9/3, pp. 18, 266, 289; D/B/ta/4/3/4 (1938); *Taunton Courier*, 3 Sep. 1938; BNA, accessed 7 July 2021.

³¹⁶ SHC, A/APN/2/6; SHC, R.P. Elliott, 'Taunton: an urban study', TS Durham BA geog. dissertation c. 1966, 20.

³¹⁷ *VCH Som. II*, 358; G. Williamson, *Trade Tokens issued in the Seventeenth Century*, (1891), 991—2.

Norris family had a press between the 1720s and 1820s in White Lion Court and later in Fore Street. From 1802 it was run by Isabella Norris who sold her business in the 1820s to newspaper proprietor John Marriott.³¹⁸ John Poole, printer, took several apprentices between the 1780s and 1800s most notably Caleb Stower, later the author of several seminal works on printing.³¹⁹ Newsmen and printers were among *c.* 28 trades represented in the Taunton festival procession in 1814 and nine printers were registered to vote in 1820.³²⁰ In the 19th century at least half the 10 or 12 booksellers were publishers and printers in the era of copper plate and small letter press printing.³²¹ In the 1820s Thomas Trood was a printer in Fore and High Streets. William Bragg and Sons, founded in the 1820s in Cheapside, took over Trood's business. They were printers, lithographers and engravers and published two local newspapers.³²² William Toms had a three-storey printing and book binding workshop with bookshop and library.³²³ Printers employed *c.* 30 skilled workers including engravers and lithographers in the mid 19th century.³²⁴ The introduction of large machine presses in the later 19th century able to produce newspapers necessitated larger premises and increased the workforce from 51 in 1861 to 90 in 1891.³²⁵ The Taunton and Somerset Printing and Publishing Company produced newspapers on gas-powered presses in Paul Street by 1887.³²⁶ By contrast a small printworks operated in no. 3 court, East Street from 1902 to 1910.³²⁷ In 1957 there was a silk screen printer in Bridge Street.³²⁸ Books were published in Taunton and

³¹⁸ P. Mansfield, 'John William Marriott and the Taunton Courier', *SDNQ*, XXXVI, 414—17; SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SX/106.

³¹⁹ TNA, IR1/63, p. 178; IR1/67, p. 114; IR1//69, p. 110; IR1/72, p. 13; C. Stower, *Typographical Marks* (1806), *The Printer's Grammar; or introduction to the Art of Printin* (1808); *The Compositor's and Pressman's Guide to the Art of Printing* (1808).

³²⁰ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/150; D/P/tau.m/23/29.

³²¹ *Pigot Dir.* (1830, 1842); *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861).

³²² SHC, DD/SAS/C2402/23, 63; *Pigot Dir.* (1830); *Morris & Co. Dir. Som.* (1872).

³²³ SHC, D/P/b.hl/13/2/11; DD/DP/45/1.

³²⁴ TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3.

³²⁵ TNA, RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875, 1877.

³²⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/21/866; below, newspapers.

³²⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/1/30/85; DD/IR/T/26/3, p. 56..

³²⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957).

the number of bookbinders increased from two or three in the 1820s to nine in 1891 and 13 in 1901, half of them women.³²⁹ A bookbinding workshop was built in Station Road in 1888.³³⁰

Barnicott's were printing by 1790 and c.1840 took over the business of William Toms. By 1835 they had established the Albion Press in North Street, by 1864 the Athenaeum Press in 44 Fore Street and by 1914 the Wessex Press.³³¹ In 1890 the printing works, then run as Barnicott and Pearce, occupied a large three-storey block behind the shop and showrooms employing a large number of men and women. The presses, 1st floor composing room and 2nd floor bindery and paper rooms were centrally heated and connected by a lift.³³² They produced *The Taunton and West Somerset Annual* as a rival to Goodman's directory, operated a travel agency and maintained a free library of tourist information including railway timetables.³³³ They built a large modern printing works in the late 1930s in Priory Bridge Road.³³⁴ They moved out later and took over the St Augustine Street collar works but the former building survives and although altered retains its original corner windows.

Goodman's Phoenix Printing Works was started by Edwin Goodman in Bath Place in the 1850s but by 1861 he had moved to North Street, adjoining the entrance to the Congregational Chapel and produced a Taunton directory until the early 20th century when it was taken over by Kelly's.³³⁵ Later they moved to the former carriage works behind 8 North Street where they remained until 1957 or later.³³⁶

³²⁹ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/29; Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830); TNA, HO 107/972; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875, 1877; RG13/2276—8.

³³⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/22/922.

³³¹ SHC, A/EMQ/1/2/1; A/BMG/5/2; A/BAV/1; DD/HC/15/4; *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 239; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

³³² *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 239.

³³³ *Taunton of Today* (1896), iv—v; *The Taunton and West Somerset Annual* (1904).

³³⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/99/2246; A/BMG/5/2.

³³⁵ SHC, A/DWX/5/14; Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* [from 1864].

³³⁶ A.W. Vivian-Neal, 'Materials for the history of Taunton Castle', *PSANHS LXXXVI*, 58; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 410.

Alexander Hammett founded a printing business c. 1872 at his shop 53 North Street, which was rebuilt in 1888. By 1923 the printer was Frederick Dodden.³³⁷ In the 20th century they moved to an industrial site on Priorswood Road and in 1983 employed up to 50 people producing business stationery including product labels and advertising materials.³³⁸ They were bought out in 1986 and became Lane-Hammett but commercial printing ceased in the 1990s and the retail business closed in 2016.³³⁹ In 1919 Cecil Caswell founded a firm of engravers, illuminators and illustrators and in 1926 went into partnership with George Grant. The firm remained in business until 1990 or later.³⁴⁰ The Taunton Printing Company was founded by William Bowyer in 10 Magdalene Lane, in the later 20th century but moved to Bishops Hull and was dissolved in 2019.³⁴¹

More than 100 printers and compositors were recorded in 1901 including linotype operators.³⁴² Three printing businesses employed more than 50 people each in 1934³⁴³ and paper, printing and publishing employed 1,052 in 1978 the largest manufacturing sector by that date.³⁴⁴ In addition to the Hydrographic Office, five commercial printers were still at work in the 1970s of which the largest were Barnicotts Ltd and Hammett and Company.³⁴⁵ In the 1980s there were small lithographic printers in East Reach, Paul Street, St James Street and Wood Street, none employing more than 20 people and most had closed by the 21st century.³⁴⁶

The Admiralty Hydrographic Office founded in 1795 moved to Taunton in 1941 and employed 900 people, reduced to fewer than 500 after the war. In the 1960s it had the largest

³³⁷ Morris and Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872); SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/22/921; A/BHJ/1; T/PH/rea/3/30.

³³⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 413; *Som. Business Dir.* (1983), 81.

³³⁹ *Bridgwater Mercury*, 21 June 2016: www.bridgwatermercury.co.uk; accessed 28 June 2022.

³⁴⁰ SHC, A/ABA, cat.

³⁴¹ SHC, A/DAO, uncat.; Companies Reg. 05473558.

³⁴² TNA, RG13/2276—8.

³⁴³ *Som. Regional Report* (1934), 35.

³⁴⁴ SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, 20.

³⁴⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 413.

³⁴⁶ *Som. Business Dir.* (1983), 81; Companies Reg.

litho-printing works in the country printing c. two million charts a year. By 1995 it employed 820 staff engaged mainly in the creation and publication of international marine charts and sailing directions constantly updated in printed and digital formats.³⁴⁷

Newspapers

During the 18th century the *Sherborne Mercury* was the chief regional newspaper. A Taunton newspaper was printed in 1718 and *Norris's Taunton Journal* was published weekly by William Norris 1725—7 but contained very little local news or advertisements and only had four pages.³⁴⁸ By 1794 *The Taunton Herald* was printed by a later Thomas Norris but was short-lived as he drowned in 1802.³⁴⁹ More successful was *The Taunton Courier*, first published on 22 September 1808 by John William Marriott as the *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser for Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall*.³⁵⁰ It was initially published on Thursday and was distributed by light carts to towns throughout Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. Marriott had the news from London brought by post horse, an expensive move but one that ensured the *Courier* reached more remote areas before the London mail or papers. By 1809 it was printed in premises next to the Phoenix on East Street. It was published on Wednesdays from 1855 by Frederick May in High Street with presses that could print 800 copies an hour and by 1866 by William Bragg of Cheapside.³⁵¹ The conservative *Taunton and Bridgwater Journal* was in existence by 1811 when it was managed by the antiquary and journalist James Savage, best known for his revision of Toulmin's history of Taunton in 1822 and his history of Carhampton hundred published in 1830. The paper failed in 1816 and he sold the printing press but his wife continued to run a

³⁴⁷ SHC, R.P. Elliott, 'Taunton: an urban study', TS Durham BA geog. dissertation c. 1966, 18.

³⁴⁸ *VCH, Som.* II, 358; SHC, A/AZF/9; DD/SAS/C2548/2.

³⁴⁹ SHC, DD/GRY/1.

³⁵⁰ SHC, DD/HC/120/7.

³⁵¹ P. Mansfield, 'John William Marriott and the Taunton Courier', *SDNQ*, XXXVI, 419—20; Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864).

circulating library and bookshop. After her death Savage gave up business and became librarian of the Taunton and Somerset Institution.³⁵²

After 20 years without competition the *Courier* was joined in 1836 by *The Somerset County Gazette* published on Saturdays by William Bragg of Cheapside until 1843 when production moved to a new printing works at Castle Green in Bishops Hull parish. It was joined in 1852 by *The Western News and Farmer's Market Reporter* on Mondays.³⁵³ *The Somerset County Herald* was established in 1843 produced by Bragg and Son until the 1880s when it was taken over by Harry Read with offices on the Parade.³⁵⁴ By the 20th-century it and the *Courier* were part of *The Western Gazette* group and had an office and print works at 48 Bridge Street between the bridge and the foundry, comprising a printing office, machine room, engine room, compositing room and paper cutting room in 1910. When the site was redeveloped by Allen's c. 1926 the papers were moved to number 44, now 15, Bridge Street.³⁵⁵ A smaller print works was built to the rear, now on Wood Street because of the demolition of the adjoining labour exchange and converted into shops.³⁵⁶

In 1857 *The Taunton Gazette and Farmer's Journal* was started and was published on Saturdays by Frederick May in 1864 but closed soon after.³⁵⁷ In 1861 *Clarke's Taunton and Somerset Chronicle* was produced in Fore Street but was not recorded again.³⁵⁸ *Webbs Weekly News and Standard of Freedom*, a liberal paper, was issued in 1868—9 by a newsagent's family in Bath Place.³⁵⁹ The *Courier* fell in price from 6d. in 1808 to 1d. and local newspapers proliferated as they became more affordable. In 1883 a daily version of the

³⁵² ODNB James Savage, 1767—1845: accessed 12 Apr. 2018.

³⁵³ *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); Bishops Hull, econ. hist.

³⁵⁴ *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1183, 1889, 1894).

³⁵⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/28/1819; 24/1/64/1210; D/B/ta/24/1/68/1305; TNA, IR 58/82608 (1574).

³⁵⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 9.

³⁵⁷ Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864).

³⁵⁸ *PO Dir. Som.* (1861).

³⁵⁹ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/163/3.

Somerset County Gazette was produced at ½ d. for 4 pages.³⁶⁰ Weekly papers included the *Somerset County Mail* and *West of England Express* in 1883 published in Hammet Street, the liberal *Somerset County Express* and the independent *Taunton Echo* both founded in 1887 and published in Paul Street until 1902 or later and the unionist *Taunton Mail* at Castle Green in 1896—9.³⁶¹

Penny newspapers were popular and provided work for newsagents and vendors, 14 by 1891. A news reporter was recorded in 1861 and seven in 1891 and 1901.³⁶² In addition papers for other towns including Minehead, Wellington and Wiveliscombe were printed at the Paul Street printing works by 1897.³⁶³ Apart from the *Mail* those papers, the *Courier*, *Gazette*, *Herald* and *Western News* were still published in 1914.³⁶⁴

The popularity and greater availability of national papers in the 20th century led to a loss of many local newspapers. In 1947 the *Taunton Courier*, *Somerset County Gazette* and *Somerset County Herald* had survived but the *Express and Echo* had merged and the *Western News* had become the *Western Morning News* and two Bristol papers had a branch office in Taunton.³⁶⁵ By 1972 the *Courier* and *Herald* had closed.³⁶⁶ Although some papers were issued as free community papers in the late 20th century by the early 21st century the *Somerset County Gazette* was the only Taunton newspaper and was no longer printed in the town.

Gas

³⁶⁰ SHC, DD/SAS/C2645/32.

³⁶¹ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883—99); *Taunton and West Somerset Annual 1897* (Taunton, 1896), 128; *Newspaper Press Dir.* (1902), 162.

³⁶² TNA, HO, 107/1922—3; RG9/1618; RG12/1875, 1877; RG13/2276—8.

³⁶³ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1897, 1899).

³⁶⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

³⁶⁵ SHC, A/DIF/114/12.

³⁶⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 409.

In 1816 an anonymous letter writer recommended the introduction of coal gas. He may have been John Wride who had a gas-making plant in East Street where with watchmaker and optician Thomas Lake he demonstrated gas light to encourage subscriptions to the Taunton Gas Light Company. The market house trustees failed to light Taunton with gas although the 1817 Act gave them the power to do so and the company was wound up. In 1821 a new Taunton Gas Light Company was formed with Thomas Lake as actuary and in 1822 they chose the site of two houses in Holway Lane for the gas works retaining the houses for staff. It was decided to use oil rather than coal and to have metered supplies.³⁶⁷ Apart from Lake and Wide, who was responsible for pipe laying, the works employed one man and a lamplighter supplying 68 customers and 45 public lamps by 1824. It was expensive at 50s. per 1,000 cu. ft. being made from whale and cod oil. The gasmaker suffocated in a well or tank and the company paid £5 to his widow. His successor was given a house and 17s. a week while his son was paid 8s. to be the lamplighter. In 1825 the chimney was rebuilt 14 ft higher.³⁶⁸ Oil prices rose in 1826 although it was poor quality and the company made a loss. In 1828 the works were altered to use yellow and red rosin from turpentine distilleries but they proved destructive and probably left residues in the pipes. Over the next three years palm and resin oils and an unspecified patent oil were tried but in 1833 the public lamps reverted to burning seal oil while the works was converted to coal gas at a cost of c. £4,000 including £600 for a gasometer. Oil gas production ceased on the 23 September 1833.³⁶⁹

The new gas was popular and the company was able to reduce the price to domestic consumers from 15s. to 8s. per 1,000 cu. ft. Most public buildings including the railway station were gas lit as well as the streets, businesses and houses.³⁷⁰ Three nonconformist

³⁶⁷ D. Gledhill, *The First 30 Years of Taunton Gas* 1816—46, (copy presentation at Bristol, 1985), 6—8, 12, 16; SHC, DD/CH/99/1.

³⁶⁸ SHC, T/PH/gdl/1; DD/CH/98.

³⁶⁹ SHC, DD/CH/98.

³⁷⁰ Gledhill, *The First 30 Years of Taunton Gas*, 21—5.

chapels fitted a total of 55 gas lamps and 25 were installed at the theatre. Coal gas production was let by the company and in 1842 the lessees paid £680 a year for the site and equipment including two retorts, two purifiers, two gasholders. The rent was reduced to £500 in 1844 as the price of gas was considered too high.³⁷¹ Dissatisfaction with the company reached Parliament and a new Taunton Gas Light and Coke Company was registered in 1844 offering to guarantee a maximum price of 7s. per 1,000 cu. ft.³⁷² In 1845 the new company bought out the old under the Taunton Gas Act and began to move to a new works at Tangier in Bishops Hull. The old works was demolished.³⁷³

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³⁷¹ SHC, DD/CH/98, 99/2.

³⁷² SHC, T/PH/gdl/2.

³⁷³ SHC, D/B/ta/31/7/1; DD/DP/75/5.