

on the North Midland Railway between Derby and Leeds; perhaps the most remarkable and best known of these, still in existence to-day, is Wingfield Station. The Midland Hotel at Derby began an era of railway hotels for which the Midland Railway in particular was to become famous, and this is the first example of a station and hotel being planned and built as a single unit. Thompson was also responsible at Derby for one of the earliest locomotive workshops.

From other documentary evidence he is known to have been employed as architect on the Chester to Holyhead railway and he was the architect, undoubtedly the *magnum opus* of his professional career, with Robert Stephenson as civil engineer for that truly magnificent piece of Victorian engineering architecture the Britannia Tubular Bridge over the Menai Straits.

But in 1850 at a moment which would seem to mark the very peak of a distinguished career, all information about him ceases abruptly and completely. Did he suddenly retire from professional life and if so why? If not, what did he build after 1850 and when and where did he die? It seems certain that he was not in any way related to the family of which our one time member, C. C. Thompson, the architect of Kelham Church, was a distinguished son. And he receives not even a mention in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

A NOTE ON WILLIAM BIRKIN.

By P. J. WALLIS, M.A. (Cantab.).

IT is not intended here to list the additions and corrections, sent by various kind contributors, to my article in the last *Journal* on "Some Problems in the History of Dronfield Grammar School". Incidentally, readers will be interested to know that the new name, Dronfield Henry Fanshawe School, is a modernised version of that in the 1579 Charter, and commemorates the

endowment by Henry Fanshawe. This note is confined to one man, William Birkin, who was appointed usher or second master on the reorganisation of the School in 1814, and is intended to draw attention to his phenomenal publishing activity after he returned to Derby.

Birkin was in Derby as early as 1804, when he set an Enigma in the *Ladies Diary*. In January 1814 he became master of a Commercial and Evening School at Bridge Street,¹ but he returned to Full Street² and remained there at least until 1843. His first and most successful book was a new edition, published by Henry Mozley, of *The Tutor's Assistant*, written by Francis Walkingame³ in 1751. This was the most successful school arithmetic text-book of the time, and remained in print until 1882; there is evidence of 87 official London editions, but many other London and provincial publishers also brought out editions. Birkin's preface is dated 7th February 1827; his sixth edition appeared in 1830, the seventh in 1831, the thirty-sixth in 1838, the fortieth about 1840, the fifty-first in 1843, the fifty-ninth and sixtieth in 1846, while others followed in 1851 and 1861. The writer would be pleased to hear of any other editions known to readers.

Because of the success of this text-book, from 1797 onwards various publishers brought out *Keys* to it. The earlier editions by the Mozley⁴ firm are unknown, but Birkin's, issued in 1827, was the ninth; the tenth⁵ followed in 1837, the fourteenth about 1840, others in 1841 and 1842, the eighteenth in 1844 and others in 1851 and 1861.

Like Walkingame himself, Birkin also issued separately *Arithmetical and Commercial Tables*, of which the twentieth edition was published by Mozley in 1840, and

¹ See *Derby Mercury*, 6 Jan. 1814, p. 3.

² Apart from the 1820-1 references given in the last *Journal*, see the 1823-4 and 1828 *Directories* and 1843 Burgess list.

³ Little is known about this writing-master, accomptant and most successful text-book writer, but see A. Heal, *The English Penmen*, 1945; *Dictionary of National Biography*; N.&Q. June 1956, 258-261.

⁴ The early editions of both books were published by Henry Mozley before he moved to Derby from Gainsborough, and were edited by James Falconar, master of an Academy at Doncaster.

⁵ There may have been an edition between 1827 and 1837, as Birkin's preface from Derby is dated April 1, 1830.

Interest Tables in 1833. Copies of Birkin's *Examining Questions in Arithmetic adapted to . . . Walkingame's Tutor's Assistant . . .* are known for 1830⁶ and 1848. From 1838 Birkin issued editions of *The Rational English Expositor and Guide to Pronunciation . . .*, which reached at least fourteen editions,⁷ but it is not clear whether its sequel, an *Orthographical and Etymological Expositor*, ever appeared.⁸ Birkin also edited Stephen Jones' . . . *Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary . . .*, also called "Sheridan Improved" after an earlier editor.⁹ At least two imprints, the thirteenth in 1840 and the next in 1855, are known of Birkin's edition of John Bigland's *A System of Geography and History . . .*¹⁰ Further details of editions of these and any other works, location of copies and any information about his success as a schoolmaster would be welcomed by the writer at Dronfield Henry Fanshawe School.

A QUERN STONE FOUND AT STRETTON.

By S. L. GARLIC.

IN 1954 I secured from its finder, a British Railways engine-driver, the top stone of a beehive quern which had been noticed at the bottom of a railway cutting just north of Stretton railway station. (Map. Ref. 384615.) It would be unwise to assume that the stone had been there for any length of time, a more probable reason being that it had seen use as a form of garden ornament and subsequently turned out. Children may have rolled it down the embankment.

The stone is of millstone grit and bears signs of rough usage, several pieces being broken off at the bottom edge.

⁶ Actually the preface is dated from Derby April 8, 1830.

⁷ The preface from Derby is dated October 18, 1838. Copies of the 10th and 14th editions, both without date, are known.

⁸ Announced as forthcoming in the preface to *The Rational English Expositor . . .*

⁹ No copy is known to the writer.

¹⁰ Birkin's editions were entitled *A System of Geography for the use of Schools . . .* His preface from Derby was dated February 1840.