



XIII.—A MEMOIR OF THE LATE JOSEPH OSWALD.

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On January 14, 1930, died, at his residence, 97 Osborne Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, Joseph Oswald, F.R.I.B.A., who had been for many years an active member and a trusted office-bearer in this society.

He was the only son of the late Septimus Oswald of the same city, architect, who had also been a member of our society and of whom a biography appears in its centenary volume, *Archæologia Aeliana*, 3rd ser., vol. X, page 284.

Joseph Oswald was born on March 19, 1851, in Mountain's Court, Pilgrim Street (since cleared away in the making of East Market Street), was educated at Newcastle Grammar School, served his time as an architect and surveyor with his father and was admitted into partnership with him in 1876. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1891; was a member of the council of that body, and he was in 1893 and 1894 elected president of the Northern Architectural Association which had been founded by his father and others in 1858.

Inheriting and developing his father's taste for archæology and ecclesiology, he joined our society in 1894, became its librarian from 1900 to 1903, was for many years a member of the council and was one of its honorary secretaries, jointly with the late Robert Blair, from 1913 to 1924, in which latter year he resigned that position through ill health.

He contributed to *Archæologia Aeliana* an important

and informing paper on *The Honorary Members of the Society during its First Century* and another on *Bitchfield Tower*; and to the *Proceedings* many useful and instructive notes, addresses, photographs and exhibits, both at the indoor and at the outdoor meetings of the society. We need not give the index references to those contributions as they are all carefully indexed under his name in our *General Index to Transactions 1895-1924* at page 311 thereof.

His father had joined the society in 1876 and died in 1894; he himself joined it in that latter year, and his son and late partner, Mr. Harold Oswald, is one of our members to-day; so that there has been for fifty-three years a family connection with the society and it still exists. He also served on the committee of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland, of which he was a member, and he took an active part in its proceedings.

Dying at the age of seventy-nine, Joseph Oswald was then the oldest architect in Newcastle. After his death adequate accounts appeared in the local press of the extensive and important works in which he had been engaged in his own profession. In his holidays he travelled much for recreation and improvement, visiting Italy, Greece, Russia, Portugal, and Morocco, besides the European countries nearer home. He was a well-read man and a lover of art; his genial disposition endeared him to many friends and they sympathized with him in his long final illness which kept him bedridden in the closing years of his life. Up to the last he maintained a warm interest in all that took place in our society though he could no longer attend its meetings.

He left a grown-up family of two sons and two daughters; his wife, Mrs. Mary Dodds Oswald, daughter of Charles Stephenson, predeceased him, dying in 1922.

The Oswald family came to Gateshead and Newcastle from Cumberland one hundred and sixty years ago; and for about the first half of that period, during the lives of

three consecutive generations bearing the name Joseph Oswald, they were engaged in the woollen industry, an important trade which has now almost entirely left this district. It may interest our readers if there is added to this memoir a short sketch of its operations and decay as illustrated by that family's connection with it.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the manufacture of wool into raiment had spread from domestic work in the country to factories in the towns, but up to the beginning of the nineteenth century it was still accomplished solely by hand-labour. The wool was combed by hand wool combs set with long iron teeth, into yarn, the yarn was spun by hand-worked spinning-wheels into thread, and the thread was woven by hand-looms into worsted stuffs. The terms incident to that occupation have become rooted in our language and in our customs, for a spinster was an unmarried woman who spins, a wife was a married woman who weaves, and our highest official, the Lord Chancellor, still sits upon a wool-sack to remind him of his duty to protect what was once the staple industry of the kingdom.

In about 1766, one Joseph Oswald who, as the son of another Joseph Oswald of Cockermouth, we will call Joseph Oswald (2) established or acquired a woollen yarn factory in Gateshead on the south side of St. Mary's church in a street called Cannon Street, now cleared away.

He probably chose the Gateshead side of the river because of the opposition of the Newcastle freemen to unfree traders, and his name does not appear in the first *Newcastle Directory* published in 1778; but that opposition was becoming less effective, and in the next *Newcastle Directory*, published in 1787, we find the name of Joseph Oswald as a woolcomber and worsted dealer, having a depot at the north end of the Tyne Bridge, and this is repeated in subsequent directories. From there he no doubt attended the Newcastle wool market, which at that time was held weekly in the open space between the cathedral and the east end of Denton Chare. In his will

of 1795 he describes himself as a woolcomber, but he was, of course, a master woolcomber, having journeymen hand combers working under him. They were a numerous body of skilled workmen. In Norwich the trade gave employment to more than five hundred combers and their number in the west of England and the West Riding of Yorkshire was very large.

Joseph Oswald (2) died in 1796 and was succeeded by his son Joseph Oswald (3) who in his turn died in 1808 and was succeeded by his son Joseph Oswald (4) who still resided in Cannon Street and carried on the factory there and the warehouse at the north end of the bridge. He encountered an increasing competition with machine-made products. The hand-comb was being displaced by cylindrical or rotary combing machines, driven by a horse, or in one instance by a bull, going round in a circle, and as early as 1794 petitions had been presented to the House of Commons by the woolcombers of the west of England complaining of "certain machines constructed for the combing of wool." They were no doubt adopted by Joseph Oswald (4) for in January, 1821, he wrote to George Stephenson asking him to make for him, Joseph Oswald (4), a steam engine to drive his machines.

George Stephenson was then a busy man. Application had been made for the Stockton and Darlington Tramroad Act in 1818, he had been appointed engineer to construct the Hetton Coal Company's railway in 1819, and on January 30, 1821, he wrote to Joseph Oswald (4) the letter in reply now produced for your inspection. It is couched in rather reluctant terms, but in it he offers to make the engine for £300. The offer was accepted and the engine was made and paid for. Our late member formerly held a receipt for the sum signed by George Stephenson, but that receipt has been mislaid.

At Leeds the engine-works which arose there to supply the plant of the mills of similar industries waxed so great that, whilst the industries themselves flagged, Leeds became the chief engineering centre in Yorkshire and



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there was a somewhat similar result in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Joseph Oswald (4) took into partnership his brother-in-law Thomas Small. He was in 1834 still living at Cannon Street and their factory was working there, but prices were falling, the trade was shifting to Yorkshire and no longer afforded them a living, and shortly after that date it was given up. By 1839 Joseph Oswald (4) had removed entirely to Newcastle, where he carried on the business of a dealer in worsted and yarn at Butcher Bank and had his residence in Sallyport Court.

He died at the house in Gateshead of his daughter Mrs. Reveley in 1856, leaving a numerous family. His eldest son Joseph Oswald (5) died young without issue. His seventh child was the Septimus Oswald who was the father of our esteemed late member Joseph Oswald and he was the sixth of that name in a direct line.