

# INTRODUCTION

My interest in Shotnell began whilst researching my family history, rural cutlers and pocket knife manufacture. The latter took place for centuries in some rural districts around Sheffield but has received little academic attention, this unique army of workers having been much overshadowed by the emergence of the more intense activities that developed within the City of Sheffield. Few remained after the First World War. Some historians believe that rural metal workers played an important part in the beginnings of the industrial revolution.

Great inspiration and help was given by the amateur Sheffield historian Dennis Smith who has written some groundbreaking articles on the subject. I am also indebted to Chris Morley of Grenoside for his meticulous research on the area.

Many rural cutlers had dual occupations, at Shotnell they were farmers, and elsewhere they were also publicans, shop-keepers and even a gamekeeper.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, farmers often had, various secondary occupations, particularly when the land was only marginally productive. However, in the case of many cutler-farmers the land was not always poor and they were often more prosperous than those occupied with other secondary trades.<sup>2</sup>

The advantage of having dual trades is perhaps obvious, the most profitable occupation at a given time, would likely be given the most emphasis, farming in particular would have busy and slack periods. It is now difficult to judge which took precedence over such long time periods and census data tends to record one occupation.

Shotnell Farm was midway between the villages of Grenoside and Birley Carr where several families of cutlers also worked at various times but not in great numbers. Ecclesfield Parish had other metal trades that tended to take precedence, notably the manufacture of forks, steels, nails, files, shuttle tips, gimlets etc. There were of course changes over the centuries.

Many farms and houses around Grenoside in the eighteenth century seem to have had a smithy and were involved with some form of metal work. Nail making and then file cutting became widespread and perhaps surprisingly, several pioneering iron and steel foundries.<sup>3</sup>

The term “Cutlery” in Sheffield was often used to describe, “Anything that cuts” which therefore included scissors and sometimes files etc. For my purposes, and according to my interest, I will be usually referring to knives and more specifically pocket knives.

Fancy multi-bladed knives and the smaller penknives, (as well as the cheaper utility knives) tended to be made in Sheffield as emphasis shifted to the factory system.

The invention (or introduction) of spring knives occurred in Sheffield around 1640-1650<sup>4</sup> Prior to this date, cutlers would have only made fixed blade sheath knives and table knives. Single bladed knives were often used for eating and general purpose.

Rural cutlers would have been capable of making a variety of styles and possibly only limited by the cost of materials and machinery. Specialisation in a simple type and evidently there was a great demand for utility or common work knives.

Barlow<sup>5</sup> knives were a common type of work knife arguably made famous by Samuel Barlow and made by many rural cutlers. They were made in great numbers by the Furniss family at Stannington and by George Furniss at Lane Head Grenoside.<sup>6</sup> They were of a particular strong design yet cheap to make and to buy. At times they were not profitable to produce and larger firms like Wostenholms exported them by the barrel as “lost leaders”. Barlow knives were exported in large numbers to America where they achieved legendary status. It’s said they were sold in every store.

Fig 1. This particular knife is said to have been once owned by George Washington. A photo was sent to Sheffield Museum which was identified by Dennis Smith in 1976. It is certainly a Furniss made knife and looking at the evidence, it seems an intriguing possibility.

I make and repair traditional pocket knives and know that it takes a certain “know how” and many processes to make even a basic pocket knife, “Walk and Talk”. These rural cutlers were likely working in less than ideal situations, and farmed as well!

The buildings that constituted the farmstead unfortunately no longer exist but this is my effort to recall some of its long fascinating history. I initially only intended to look at the Cutlery activities of the Dyson’s but this unexpectedly expanded somewhat.

Phillip Hall the farmer from Upper Hurst, and current tenant of the Shotnell land says that Shotnell was very badly damaged in the great gale of 1963. The last people, who lived there, from around World War Two, were the Whitehouse family.<sup>7</sup>

According to another Shotnell neighbour, the farm was demolished because two councils clashed. Sheffield Council owned the land and the rates were paid to Wortley Rural District Council. I am told that someone was interested in renovating the property but it was demolished around 1968.<sup>8</sup> During demolition at least two large “A” frames or crucks were exposed.<sup>9</sup>

If Shotnell would seem to be an unlikely setting for industrial enterprise, four hundred yards along Stubbing House Lane towards Oughtibridge Lane, was situated Stubbing House Farm. It was originally associated with Shotnell and has itself a very long and fascinating history.<sup>10</sup>

# THE LOCATION OF SHOTNELL AND POSSIBLE NAME ORIGINS AND THE DYSON SURNAME

The map reference is; SK 327930. The land is now part of a farm at Upper Hurst. I believe Sheffield City Council own the land but they no longer possess any records.<sup>11</sup>

A fascinating name that has been variously known, historically as Shotten Hill, Shotnall, Shotnel or Shotnell and various other spellings.<sup>12</sup>

Morley<sup>13</sup> believes the name Shotnell to mean a division of land, usually applied to an area divided off from a larger area of land and adds that Shotnell was divided from Stubbing House Farm and was sold off sometime prior to 1345. He cites “Outshot” as a term still in use today. I found a “Google” (not credited) definition that gave, “Rough uncultivated pasture land on a farm”. The farm was located below a steep bank. I wonder then, was it called, “Outshot Hill” before being abbreviated over time.

Regarding the surname Dyson; Professor Bryan Sykes<sup>14</sup> professor of human genetics at Oxford University, found that DNA samples showed that the male (y) chromosome had a remarkable consistent genetic lineage. (90%, the average is 50%) This enabled him to trace the surname origin back to one person, a lady called Dye or Dyonisia of Linthwaite. She had a son called John (Dyes-son). They lived in a small Pennine village in the Colne valley called Linthwaite, four miles west of Huddersfield. John Dyson first

appeared in court rolls in connection with some cattle rustling in 1280.

A John Dyson known as John de Langside, (Langsett) moved to Broomhead in the Chapelry of Bradfield in the fourteenth century. Intriguingly he obtained land that was given up in 1367 by a Franklin; Henry de Birley,<sup>15</sup> an Ecclesfield based family. Their surname appears to be connected with the Birley stone, an ancient boundary and roadside marker perched high on Birley Edge above the Stubbing House and Shotnell farm sites.

Some adjoining land was leased from the Manor of Hallam to the de Byrley Family in 1343.<sup>16</sup> Addy<sup>17</sup> points out that an actual place by the name Burley is not known. He says, Birlaystone is mentioned as a place name only in 1424, “ .... for in that year I find that William de Birlay of Birlaystone conveyed lands in the neighbourhood”.

It seems that various Dyson’s over the centuries slowly migrated south from the Colne valley and are perhaps responsible for most of the early Dyson’s to be found in the Ecclesfield-Sheffield areas. Bolsterstone Church yard has what seems, an inordinate number of Dyson occupants.<sup>18</sup> It is not clear why this migration took place from the Colne valley. The economy there was historically, largely based on agriculture and the woollen industries. Evidently the family was proliferating and possibly opportunities had to be sought by some elsewhere.

In 1881 there were almost 10,000 Dysons in Britain with 7,000 living in Yorkshire. Some 287 still lived in the Linthwaite area constituting up to 5% of that population. It continues to be a “West Riding surname” today, albeit to a lesser degree.<sup>19</sup>

It was still a surprise when I eventually traced the origins of the Shotnell Dysons!

My own “Dyson” connection, with the Shotnell family, apart from “Linthwaite”, is because both families married into a Grenoside metalworking family called Wyke.

Many other surnames migrated from this Pennine textile area, a process that is still not fully understood.

Fig.2. West Riding map showing Ecclesfield and Huddersfield Parishes before 1832. Linthwaite was then situated within Huddersfield parish and twenty eight miles distant from Shotnell, as the crow flies. It must have been quite a difficult journey in the early 1700s in the pre-turnpike days.

The old Ecclesfield Parish was one of the largest in the country and enclosed much moorland and agricultural areas particularly within the Chapelry of Bradfield.

Despite this predominant rural character there was a long tradition of metal working in many villages and isolated farms which in some cases lasted hundreds of years.

Bradfield Chapelry later became a Parish and was notable for its metalworkers and in particular for its rural cutlers who existed despite the isolated Pennine landscape and its often poor communications.

I have always found the life and work of these rural cutlers fascinating particularly since there is very little comparable to be found elsewhere.

Contact with Sheffield town was vital for materials and marketing. The geography was not very conducive but there were gradual improvements. Originally the trade was served by a network of footpaths, pack horse trails, roads, canals and railways.

Fig.3. 1960 O.S.Map. The location and some places that are mentioned in the text. Shotnell Farm is not named but I have circled the site in green. The River Don would have supplied grinding facilities.

Stubbing House Lane which ran alongside Stubbing House at Shotnell was at one time a medieval “Kings highway” connecting Sheffield with the north. It is first mentioned in 1161.<sup>20</sup> I have high-lighted the route in red.

This early use may suggest dwellings alongside could also have originated from a very similar date. It was earlier called Hunter House Lane which confirms its early use as a through route to the north. (It is marked as such on Ecclesfield Enclosure Map fig.35) It ceased to be used as a through route when the Sheffield to Halifax Turnpike was built in 1777 which ran through Grenoside.

Stubbing House Lane intersects another early route now called Oughtibridge Lane which connected essentially, Ecclesfield Church to Bradfield Chapelry. The Burley Stone overlooks the intersection and was an important way side cross and boundary maker.

Fig.4. Photo of Shotnell 1960 by Norman Bradley. (Stubbing House was four hundred yards further along this ancient route which dates back to medieval times.)

Birley Edge, runs parallel and above to the right and has always been

uncultivated or pastureland. It is now almost overgrown with trees.

Fig.5. The cleared site in 2011 (Photo by the author) The site today reveals few remains, other than the gate, and much of the site has been subsequently tipped over and levelled. A low short wall can be seen below the side of Stubbing House Lane which may show the remains of an outbuilding.

Amazingly the foot-print of the farm house can still be seen by Google satellite imagery (2012)

## THE HISTORIC CONNECTIONS WITH STUBBING HOUSE FARM

Stubbing House Farm was situated further along the lane from Shotnell near the junction of Oughtibridge Lane. It was demolished sometime in the late 1950s and only its foundations and some timbers remain.

Morley in “Round and about Grenoside”,<sup>21</sup> Says, It appears that parcels of land at Birley Edge were sold off from the manor of Sheffield during the 1190s by Gerard de Furnival in order to raise money so as to take part in the Crusades. One of the buyers was the Scott family who proceeded to clear the land. A charter of Release and Quit Claim, dated 1343, mentions it stretched all the way from Birley Carr to Cliffewell, (later known as Edgewell). Then along Stubbing House Lane to Stubbing House Farm.

Fig.6a. Stubbing House Farm c1900 (Post card photo). The foundations are still visible and the boundary wall, shown below, still exists. A cruck barn was thought to be at the rear.

Morley says that, “Shotnell was probably divided from Stubbing House when the latter was sold off to the Scott family some time prior to 1443”. Stubbing House then became known as “Scott Stubbing” and was part of the Barnes Hall estate. John Scott is mentioned in a deed connected

with Stubbing in 1387 and a Thomas Scott, (Archbishop of York) was, at one time, also in possession. A will of 1498 mentions Stubbing as being a hereditary estate and in the Scott family since, “a time beyond memory of man”. In 1647, Thomas Linthwaite, a mason, was of Stubbin House. The estate eventually passed into the Watts family, eventually becoming known as Watts Horton Estate by 1663.<sup>22</sup>

The Roberts family appear at Stubbing House and Birley House around 1680. Isaac we know was a “clothier” possibly from the Holmfirth area. A brother, Jacob was a cutler who in 1719 surrendered a “messuage”<sup>23</sup> and close at Shotnell to a cutler called Longsdon. It comprised of a dwelling house together with its outbuildings, curtilage, and the adjacent land appropriated to its use.<sup>24</sup>

Later members of the Roberts family became silversmiths and provided, a Master Cutler, Members of Parliament and a number of Baronets. Most were called Samuel and one built the Queens Tower in the Norfolk Park area of Sheffield, in 1839, an extravagant residence which still exists as a flats complex.<sup>25</sup>

Joseph Walker (1678-1729) was a Farmer and nailer, born at Grenoside he became a tenant of Stubbing House from 1722, following the vacation of Isaac Roberts.

According to David Hey,<sup>26</sup> at around the 1740s, two of Joseph’s sons, Aaron and Joseph experimented in the melting of iron in pots at nail makers smithy owned by Abraham Booth on Oughtibridge Lane.

It is said that “mystery” surrounds the whereabouts of this Smithy, however, we know that there was a Nailmaking smithy at the rear of the present Lane Head House on Oughtibridge Lane and the title was held (1748) by a “John Booth, Gent, Rotherham”.<sup>27</sup> The Walkers were born at Hollins House a few hundred yards to its rear and they still appear to have retained an interest in that property at this period.<sup>28</sup> David Hey mentions a John Booth as being a son of Abraham’s cousin.

After a furnace was built at Grenoside village the Walker business developed and they moved to Rotherham to become premier iron workers. “The capital was supplied by a John Booth, a prosperous yeoman nailer”. The first of four generations to be called John.<sup>29</sup>

Morley believes that, Their industrial endeavours were on a par with the Darbys of Coalbrookdale and their contribution to iron and steel making and the “spin-offs”, greatly helped in the establishment of Rotherham and Sheffield as a premier production region in Britain.<sup>30</sup>

Among other products they made cannon and ball for the American and Napoleonic wars which can still be seen at Portsmouth docks and elsewhere.

They had some correspondence with William Wilberforce and Tom Paine. The latter they supplied with iron for some of his innovative bridges.<sup>31</sup>

Stubbing House farm was at some stage sold to John Machen of Wardsend.<sup>32</sup> According to William Steel,<sup>33</sup> when the Machin,s (John?) lived there it became a “file factory”, and “Many an apprentice lad served his time in the file trade at this house”.

He says foundations of the business here and at the Hirst, led to the establishing of the works at Wadsley Bridge. “Moss and Gamble” was the later name of the works started here by John Finch Machen, George Hides Machen, and Henry Miller, Steel and file manufacturer, a partnership that broke down around 1870.

Other occupiers have been at some time Edwin Mallinson and John Flويد.<sup>34</sup>

I am hopeful that one day the amazing story of Stubbing will one day be more fully researched.

Fig.6b. Stubbing House Farm from above (Courtesy Andrew Machin)

## HISTORIC REFERENCES TO SHOTNELL

The building evidently underwent much alteration in antiquity we can plainly see from the photo (Fig.28 below) that it had at least one major extension to its downside. The 1901 O.S. map seems to indicate another “division to the right? (Partially concealed by trees in the photo)

I am told that during demolition at least two “A” frames were exposed indicating a cruck construction.<sup>35</sup> (Unfortunately it is not clear in which parts.) Crucks were a common method that was used notably in barns up to the eighteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

A one-time neighbour<sup>37</sup> believes that there was a date stone but its inscription is unknown. I doubt if the date would shed light as to the buildings origins.

The first known document that refers to Shotnell is in 1613 when a William Hey of “Shotnal below Birley Edge”, Yoeman, is mentioned in the Sheffield Manorial Records.<sup>38</sup> There were apparently, two houses upon this site, Thold house – containing two bays, and le old lathe that contained one and a half bays.<sup>39</sup>

During the period 1680 to 1690 the family of Roberts appear in the area around Birley Carr”. They appear to be cloth workers and all appear at the same time, possibly from the Holmfirth area. Abraham lived at Birley

House, another, Samuel at Stubbin but Daniels abode is not known. Their relationship is also uncertain.<sup>40</sup>

In his Will, Samuel Roberts (Snr. died 1715) “bequeaths to his daughter Lydia Levick the rent of one house with the land thereto belonging to a place called Shotten Hilll, now in the tenure and occupation of John Trickett” (A cutler at Shotnell with apprentices there in 1692 and 1713<sup>41</sup>) Also, together with a messuage and tenement at Shotnal that he leased to a William Yates, (Probably a cutler.<sup>42</sup>) Morley suggests that these were the, “Thold house and ye old Lathe” mentioned previously.

Apparently ownership was still in the family in 1719 when Jacob Roberts, a son of Samuel and Lydia of Stubbin House, surrendered to the court, a messuage and close at Shottenhill. It was then surrendered to James Longsdon, a cutler.<sup>43</sup> I have been unable to find any further information about this cutler and particularly if he actually worked at Shotnell which would seem a strong possibility.

Jacob Roberts (Bapt. 1697) was apprenticed to, William Warberton; a cutler at Neepsend in 1709 and he became a freeman in 1719. He was living in Bridgehouses in Sheffield in 1719.<sup>44</sup> His conduct was said to become irregular and that complicated transactions followed.<sup>45</sup>

Shotnal was transferred to a tanner, Joshua Bridges in November 1719.<sup>46</sup> and Jacob Roberts finally released all his holdings over Shotnal in 1724. He then “disappeared” in 1728.<sup>47</sup>

The Fairbanks map below is of interest since it is contemporary with some early Dyson cutlery activity. As mentioned previously, with regard to Stubbing, the ownership of the Barns Hall Estate had passed into the Watts family becoming known as Watts Horton by 1663

Fig.7. Fairbank Map 1787<sup>48</sup> “Allotments of Ecclesfield” (Sheffield Archives WIL D278)

Map book (no.2492) states the, proprietor as being John Kirby, occupiers William Dyson and John Tate, croft and two homesteads at Shotnell, William Dyson also occupies Meadow Place (just over one acre). He also holds Holliday Field (over one acre) Middle Field (one acre) and Little Field, (less than one acre.)

A Will<sup>49</sup> dated 1760 by Sam Kirby of Little Sheffield (A Moorside butcher) gives his second son John Kirby a copyhold messuage & appurtenances. Lands lying at Shotten Hill late in the possession of John

Trickett and now in the possession of William Dyson. To Daughter Mary Kirby, all that other copyhold messuage at Shotten Hill, late in possession of William Yates and now in the possession of William Dyson and his under tenants and also closes of land called Holliday closes. Also to his daughter Mary, closes of land at Stubbing called Andrew Carr.

(Kirby was dead by 1761, it appears a descendent has forced to sell the farm in 1841, see appendix)

Some of the fields mentioned above were in a line between Shotnell and Upper Hurst. They are also listed in the 1841 sale notice.

The map notation suggests that Shotnell is no longer linked with Stubbing House and

That the Watts Horton Estate is still the major landowner at this time A descendant,

Sir Watts Horton sold their property in parcels some time before 1811.<sup>50</sup>

Note that on the Fairbanks map the lane forks, "Southward". This is Edgewell Lane and was a direct route to Sheffield and a likely section of the Kings Highway. It is now an overgrown footpath. It has remnants of a wall at either side and would no doubt have been used when travelling to and from Sheffield by the locals including the inhabitants of Shotnell.

W.F.Dixon (1839-1884) of Birley House, a prominent silverware manufacturer of Cornish Place, at some time paid for a trough to be placed on this section.<sup>51</sup> It is quite a large stone trough and still exists though it is now broken. It is difficult to imagine now but for centuries this route must have seen many travellers including pack horse trains carrying goods to and from the north.

Fig.8. Edgewell Lane. Possibly this was once part of the medieval highway. Stubbing House Lane runs across the top but this route would be more direct to and from Sheffield. The trough is a few yards below the track and located on a spring; presumably this was at the site of an old well. As already noted, Cliffwell was mentioned in a 1343 claim. (Photo by author 2011)

# SHEFFIELD CUTLERY MANUFACTURE AND THE CUTLERS COMPANY

Extract below take from

<http://www.cutlers-hallamshire.org.uk/html/history/>

For a more detailed history refer to Binfield and Hey, “Mesters and Masters”.<sup>52</sup>

When the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire was incorporated by an Act of Parliament in 1624, the local cutlery industry was already over three centuries old. In 1297, a man called Robert the cutler appears in a tax return, the earliest surviving evidence for the local cutlery trades.

The ancient administrative unit called ‘Hallamshire’ is centred on the mediaeval parish of Sheffield, with the adjoining parishes of Ecclesfield and Handsworth. Hallamshire was the southernmost shire of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria and its boundary separated Northumbria from Mercia.

Surviving 16th century records show that the powerful Earls of Shrewsbury, who were the Lords of the Manor of Hallam, had taken an active interest in the local trade, but on the death of Gilbert, Earl of Shrewsbury in 1616, the manor passed to non-resident lords.

The cutlers of Sheffield were left without any guiding control over their

affairs and so petitioned Parliament for an Act of Incorporation in 1624. The Cutlers’ Company of Hallamshire took over the responsibility for binding apprentices, admitting Freemen, registering marks and devised regulations to ensure the quality of workmanship.

Fig.9. Area controlled by the Cutlers Company. “Hallamshire and six miles compass of the same”. The boundary extends to Holmfirth even though no cutlery manufacture seems to have occurred north of Bradfield-Ecclesfield Parish. The boundary was probably created to incorporate Derbyshire cutlers.

## SOME MEHODS OF THE RURAL CUTLERS

Lacking direct evidence for methods used at Shotnell, I can only make comparisons to other known methods of other contemporary cutlers who almost certainly worked in much the same way.

Arguably all the cutlers were at one time “rural cutlers” since up to the eighteenth century Sheffield was a small market town surrounded by smaller townships and villages. The early cutlery directories give mention to Crookes, Walkey, Neepsend, Heeley, Attercliffe and Darnall etc.

Through time, many districts specialised in other trades but some rural cutlers survived in the town and to the North West. This area was mainly in the old Ecclesfield Parish, and particularly in what became Bradfield Parish. Industrial methods of production increasingly took precedence in Sheffield itself which produced increasingly diverse pen and pocket knives and in ever greater quantities.

The reasons for the cutler’s survival in this particular rural area are curious but probably relate to advantages that include the numerous fast rivers that favoured water wheels and grindstones that were readily available.

By the early twentieth century the rural cutlers that remained tended to be centred on the Stannington and Wadsley areas. This was possibly because of good access to grinders on the Rivelin and Loxley rivers and a close

proximity to Sheffield itself.

In 1672 only 38% of metal craftsmen actually lived in Sheffield Township<sup>53</sup> this was to reverse over time with practically all cutlery being made in Sheffield itself.

A statute of the Cutlers Company after 1624 decreed the cutler was to manufacture the knife in its entirety.

Leader<sup>54</sup>(1901) said that, “men are still remembered who forged their own blades and springs, marked, hardened and tempered them at their houses, and ground them themselves at one of the wheels and finally making them up. He points out that initially the water wheel buildings were called “cutlers wheels”, not “Grinding wheels”.

Grinding generally did not become a separate trade until late in the eighteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

Development was inevitable fuelled by ever growing demand. This brought the need for powered machinery and an increase in skills. Specialisation gradually took place and eventually various knife components would be available to the cutler.

This would eventually lead to a cutler only being responsible for the assembly of the knife components and any small adjustments he deemed necessary.

We know at least some Stannington cutlers, made the knife up with the unfinished blade in place, known as, “in the black”, and not yet ground.<sup>56</sup> Having taken the assembled knives to a grinding wheel, he or full time grinder, would then grind the blades. The cutler then only had to glaze the blades using fine emery glued on to small wheels probably back in his own workshop. This method saved time since the loose blade did not need a clamp when grinding.

The rural cutler exploited a niche by continuing to make robust but cheap general purpose work knives. They would meet the needs of farmers, textile workers, fishermen etc. (sometimes the scouts and the armed forces.)

Few of these rural cutlers were still active by the time of the First World War.

Methods of pocket knife making remained remarkably the same for hundreds of years, a fact remarked upon by the onetime cutler Joseph Hunter<sup>57</sup> in 1819 when he says that the cutlers of his day were using the same methods and making the same articles as were their forbears of the seventeenth century.

I imagine that the little mesters that remain today would not be

completely “lost” in an old workshop but would probably miss the powered machinery and the necessary good lighting.

As recently as 1955<sup>58</sup>, the last working rural cutler was probably Albert Furness, who belonged to a long established family of Stannington cutlers that stretched back to at least the eighteenth century. Albert was still making pocket knives commercially without power at this date. He used a foot powered treadle glazer. (See example below) At the age of 81 he was still producing dozens of knives a day at the Tofts Rivelin, opposite the Rivelin Hotel where his father, had been a cutler and publican.<sup>59</sup>

A local farmer, Frank Revitt<sup>60</sup> recollected that in the 1950s Albert appeared to have worked primarily as an out worker for George Wostenholme (IXL mark). Every Thursday (market day) he went to Sheffield and called at the Washington works on Wellington Street. On these trips he delivered finished knives and returned with components such as blades, springs, scales, bone, and wire. He walked carrying his wares in a leather wallet over his shoulder. Revitt says he made large lambs-foot knives for Australia which suggests that the Barlows were not the only type made.

His work methods were typical of a rural cutler, essentially hundreds of years old and quite remarkable to have lasted into the 1950s.

Albert (1876–1957) was descended from the same family of Stannington cutlers as George Furness (born 1802) who worked with his sons at Lane Head, Grenoside, only half a mile from Shotnell from the 1850s.<sup>61</sup> The family mainly specialised in making what the Americans came to know as “Stannington Barlows”.<sup>62</sup>

Trevor Abblett, a present Sheffield cutler, continues to work in essentially the same, “old” way as the past rural cutlers. He works by himself and produces general purpose work knives. He moves a batch of knives along in a tray carrying out various processes. In order to make this method pay, he has to work at great speed using techniques that have only come about with experience. He tells me that at times his wife has helped him with some tasks when he was behind with an order, a practice that was often employed by rural cutlers.

Despite essentially being “handmade”, his knives exhibit a uniformity of appearance and serviceable quality. I believe he is perhaps the last of the hundreds cutlers that worked in this way, in and around Sheffield.

Sheffield work knives tended to have a, “rustic” character very different from most other countries. They have little consideration towards decoration but exhibit a quality that I find personally find very interesting.

To this day there is usually something distinct about a Sheffield knife.

Fig.10. Treadle glazer or polisher used at a Stannington workshop sketched by Smith in the 1970s. This was a common piece of equipment used by the rural cutler. The wheel would usually be coated with glued on emery of various grades. The blades would be finished off with this machine as would be the spring backs. A high polish would not be sought (or not possible) and indeed the roughness of some knives gave rise to the derogatory term, “Wadsley Flatbacks”.

The rural cutlers increasingly outworked for the larger Sheffield firms or an intermediary who would supply all the component parts and then would later buy back the completed knives. A system that was known as, “liver and draw”.<sup>63</sup>

Fig.11. Some examples of 18th century tools taken from the book “The House of Wostenholme”<sup>64</sup>

The drawing lacks descriptions but many of these tools are very recognisable today. For example, Parser and bow (see below), hand clamp, hacksaw, Swaithing knife, hammers, saw knife, pliers, emery board, file, emery wheel and leg vice.

The cutler’s anvil or stiddy must have very soon evolved into a much smaller affair which fitted into a hole in the bench. A pattern that we know was historically particularly essential for the spring knife cutler (see below).

Fig.12 A Cutlers Stiddy or anvil in the authors workshop (Photo by author 2011)

Fig.13 The tools of Colin Goodison from the Dennis Smith Collection (photo by the author 2011)

The above parser and other tools belonged to Colin Goodison, a Stannington cutler.

The breast plate, top right was belted around the cutler’s upper waist. The drill was located in a hole in the plate and the other end offered into the knife part. The bow leather was then wrapped around the bobbin and then by moving the bow diagonally across, cutting or drilling resulted. He

may have made these tools as an apprentice and may well date from the early 1900s.

Fig.14. A side vice, also called a “Snap Dragon” was used to hold bone or stag scales (sides) to enable filling. This would have been an essential item. So too was the leg vice in which it is held. (Authors tools and photo 2011)

The provision of tools would have been the main outlay for the cutler starting out. An apprentice would normally be taught to make many of his own hand tools, although some masters would give them their old tools. A workshop of some sort was of course required but this could have been the utilisation of an existing building or perhaps take the form of a simple “Lean to”. Many rural workshops have not survived simply because of this rough construction.

The relatively small outlay required enabled vast numbers to take up the trade on a self-employed basis.

## CUTLERY MANUFACTURE AT SHOTNELL (DYSONS)

Mention has been made of some early cutlers that worked at Shotnell but I will now examine the activities of the Dyson's which span from about 1739 to about 1860 at Shotnell with the last one working in Sheffield sometime before 1900.

As already indicated the amount of equipment needed at Shotnell, would have been quite minimal. The workshop probably housed a small forge used for hardening and tempering springs, and possibly blade forging in the earlier periods.

A complication with the Census records is that they do not always show if cutlers worked at their abode or perhaps elsewhere as a "Journeyman". At Shotnell it is clear that the cutlers worked at the farm which I imagine was the favoured arrangement. It is often said that the rural cutlers valued their independence and worked as and when they saw fit. As long as an order was fulfilled it didn't matter.

At certain times of the year farming would take precedence, and vice versa. I am not sure if farmer-cutlers had the opportunity to have, "Saint Monday", as a day off. It's said that many cutlers had this unofficial holiday to indulge in various, "pastimes" such as following the hunts or drinking sprees. They then had to catch up on orders later in the week.

The Shotnell cutlers probably had their blades ground at wheels on the nearby River Don. A 1761 will<sup>65</sup> of a William Burton, mentions three cutlers wheels at either Upper Middlewood (Oughtibridge) or lower Middlewood Forge. (These wheels would be in reach of other cutlers, such as those at Oughtibridge Worrall and Wadsley).

Smith<sup>66</sup> says that Stannington cutlers would have leased wheels on the Rivelin and Loxley Rivers from the 1750s. Wadsley cutlers would have availed themselves of wheels on either the Loxley or the Don. Wheels were often built by wealthier cutlers and let or sublet. A rural cutler may have rented a trough for a day per week.

As already stated, we know that some of these cutlers had the blade ground when the knife was already made up which may well have been the case at Shotnell. From the "Shotnell" trade directory listings below, we can say at that at this time, the knives would be of the "common type" and utilitarian in character. They were likely capable of grinding themselves or may have found it more cost effective to employ a grinder.

Knives would be produced in a large quantity, by the dozen or gross. A dozen was said to be 13 for a cutler! This unpopular demand was imposed by a Master Cutler in 1787.<sup>67</sup> Note that in the Sketchly Directory the Shotnell listing gives the prices per gross. The cost per knife was therefore a little more than 1d. (One old penny)

The restrictions initially imposed by the Cutlers Company were quite harsh and would require an apprentice to work indentured to a master for seven or sometimes up to ten years. This was not an option for many families when more income was badly needed.

An alternative was to be apprenticed to your father which was often more informal and was thus not always recorded. At Shotnell, William (senior) who had been apprenticed and now a Freeman, taught his son and this was later formalised with the Cutlers Company in 1751 (fig. 15 below)

From the Cutlers Company records (See below fig.15) it appears that William Dyson (Snr) was apprenticed to a John Eyre of Grenoside around 1739. His father, also named William, is described as a husbandman of the Chapelry of Bradfield (He was originally from the Colne valley area and unlikely to have been a cutler).

David Hey<sup>68</sup> lists a Thomas Eyre at Grenoside in 1726 as a Cutler and farmer.

A William Dyson, master cutler, is listed by the Cutlers Company at Wadsley Bridge with an apprentice; Thomas Jepson, who became a Freeman

in 1757. I believe this to be William Senior at Shotnell. Wadsley Bridge is only a mile away and William or the Cutlers Company clerk may have deemed it a near enough as a location. William (Senr) married a Mary Jepson around 1850, so there may well be a family connection here.

Fig.15. William Dyson (senior) indentured to John Eyre, cutler at Grenoside, for 8 years in 1739. Son of William, husbandman. He was not registered as a Freeman until 1751. (CCR).

The 1774 Sketchley Directory below lists a John Wd Eyre with the location Birley Carr. (The Charles Dyson listed worked at Bingley House Farm in the Rivelin Valley, explored in another work).

Fig.16. List of Apprentices bound to Dysons at Shotnell showing parents abode. Extracted from the Cutlers Company Records (See more in the appendix)

The above apprentices were bound either to William senior (1725-1799) or William Junior (1758-1841) but not identified as to which except in 1792. We can assume that the first four dates relate to William senior since William junior had not yet completed his apprenticeship.

We can see that there were three apprentices in 1799 and for short periods?

This amount may be perhaps explained by there being latterly two masters when William (Junior) became a Freeman in 1779. Some apprentices may have changed occupations or even died. Many succumbed to ill health often exacerbated by their working and living conditions.

It was common for apprentices to be “turned over” if their first master had died or otherwise unable to continue work. This was incidentally the case with Jacob Roberts, originally from Stubbing House but later removed to Bridgehouses (Neepsend). He had become a master in 1718 but in 1728 the Cutlers Company accepted from his wife that he had left Sheffield and not likely to return. They therefore allowed Jack Goodlad to transfer his apprenticeship to a new master.<sup>69</sup>

Leader<sup>70</sup> (1901) referring to the eighteenth century, describes how appallingly the apprentices were often used with many preferring to join the army or navy to avoid being traced. A society was formed with the purpose of recovering runaway lads. Leader also says that it was the old custom that apprentices were boarded with the family, but they were often “indifferently

fed and worse clothed”. They often worked from sunrise until late with sometimes household chores to finish off. Deformities often occurred due to cramped repetitive work in terrible conditions.

Leader tells of a cutler-publican at Crookes who had four apprentices that were given grout porridge which was made from the refuse of brewing. They were allowed neither fire nor light.

Masters were paid to take on paupers and there was some concern that apprentices were taken on just for the money.

We don't know if the Shotnell apprentices were “ill-used” but I imagine that if they “lived in” at Shotnell (it seems probable when considering their parents abode) they may have felt very isolated. At night they perhaps looked down at the town in the valley below which was probably lit up with various forms of industrial activity. At least they would be out of the smoke of the forges that were always at work, mentioned by Defoe as early as 1720.<sup>71</sup>

We have the old broadside song, “The Sheffield Prentice”<sup>72</sup> a song that is also known abroad including America. It is interesting in that the location, Sheffield was rarely changed as was usual with many other songs. Runaway apprentices were actively sought so leaving the area was often the main way out.

*“Then I was bound apprentice and all my joys were fled.  
I did not like my master he did not use me well  
I made a resolution not long with him to dwell  
One evening from my parents and him I ran away  
I steered my course for London on that unhappy day”*

Some joined the army or navy although bound apprentices were not supposed to be enlisted.

Hey<sup>73</sup> says that in the 1780s the Cutlers Company began to lose control as to who was allowed entry into the cutlery trades. Some Freemen petitioned the company to stop masters from taking up to six apprentices. Restrictions were relaxed because of the ever increasing expansion of the trade. In 1791 an Act of Parliament repealed much of the 1624 Act which had insisted on a seven year apprenticeship and a limited number of apprentices per master. The new act allowed the sale of freedoms to outsiders. Another Act of 1814 made the trades totally free.

With regard as to what cutlery was made at Shotnell, some of the best

clues we have are to be found in several of the old trade directories.

The earliest directory dates to 1774 and was compiled by Sketchley of Bristol. He gives two listings under “spotted knives” by William Dyson, (Senior) one at 18 shillings and the other at 20 shillings (per gross) William (Junior) may have still been an apprentice at this time.<sup>74</sup>

Interestingly the location given is “Hirst” and probably a reference to the general location, often spelled Hurst. It is a fairly common place name deriving from the Anglo-Saxon “Hyrst” meaning Wooded Hill.

Perhaps confirmation of a Shotnell location is recorded on a grave inscription at Ecclesfield which states; “George Dyson from Shotnell” who died 1774”. He is also listed as a tenant in 1760 at Shotnell sometime prior to 1774.

The Sketchley Directory information may have been quite out of date by the time it was printed and is not considered as accurate as the 1787 Gales and Martin.<sup>75</sup>

Figs.17a and 17b. Extracts from the Sketchley Trade Directory 1774. Dyson is listed under Spotted Knives, selling at 18s and 20s per gross respectively (price in shillings)

Note the Briggs and Kirkby whose surnames occur elsewhere and may be significant.

Fig. 18. Gales and Martin Trade Directory 1787. William Dyson senior is listed under Spotted Knives

There are two listings for father and son (see fig 19)

(Charles Dyson was my ancestor at Rivelin and is not closely related to William, see conclusion).

William, Dyson (senior age c61) is listed here under “Spotted Knives” using the mark “DYSON” .There is apparently no record of this mark at the Cutlers Company and may have been entered in some subsequently lost Cutlers Company Records (CCR).

Spotted knives were made from horn but were spotted to resemble the more expensive tortoiseshell scales. (See fig.17, below)

According to Leader<sup>76</sup> “The imitation was effected by burning dark marks into clear horn, by treating it with a composition in which lime was an ingredient”.

Smith believes the effect was also created by spotting with dye carried

out as far back as the 17th century.<sup>77</sup>

Fig. 19. Gales and Martin Directory 1787. William Dyson junior is listed under Couteaux

Note the inclusion of a Garret, “Birley Edge” cutler in the 1787 above Directory. The 1851 Census has a Joseph Garrett, (son?) Spring knife cutler at Grenoside. This is probably the same family mentioned in a counterfeit court case, when they lived at Wood End Grenoside. Mentioned later.

William (Junior age about 29) is listed under “Couteaux” and is using the mark “AJAX”. This mark was registered with the Cutlers Company by him in 1779, when he is registered as a Freeman (below) and was aged about twenty.

Fig.20a. William Dyson (Jnr) Made a “Freeman” 1779

Fig.20b. It is not clear why there are two insertions. The print was evidently made by the same mark Photos courtesy of the Cutlers Company Record, (photo by Unwin 2011)

According to Addy<sup>78</sup> (1889) there was a trend among Stannington cutlers to use Greek or Roman names. (Homer. Virgil, Horace etc.)

I am not sure of the significance of the term “Couteaux” in the Gales and Martin directory. Ronald Dyson<sup>79</sup> in his 1936 Glossary says it refers to, “A large clasp knife”. A little later in the 1797 “Robinsons” directory, both Dysons are described as “Pocket knife” cutlers. As we know the word “Couteaux” soon fell out of use.

Robinsons Trade Directory of 1797

Perhaps William senior was making the better quality knives whilst William junior was making the “common”. I guess that both would be making a single bladed work-knife hafted with bone or wood. Scales of stag or horn would be more expensive but no doubt used if required by the customer. In the absence of any more information we can only make comparison with products made by some other contemporary rural cutlers.

Fig.21. Bone hafted knife found under the floor of a farm owned by the Sanderson family of cutlers of Low Bradfield. The blade is marked Sanderson. And is thought to date from the early 19th century.<sup>80</sup> (Photo by D.Smith)

The knife above would have been for general purpose use and possibly in the “Common” category. As well as the above, many rural cutlers would have made “Barlow” types typified by the long bolster and sturdy construction.

Fig.22. Barlow type knives from Smiths Key, a c1816 catalogue. It is likely that the ones below had real imitation tortoiseshell scales. It seems Sheffield catalogues from the eighteenth century began using numbers rather than pattern names. Note however that the blades are stamped “Barlow” and presumably made by one of the Barlow family. It is in fact very similar to one in the Dennis Smith Collection which has a fine pen blade (broken), tortoise shell scales, a worked back spring and measures a mere 4½” open. I am not sure that some historians realised that these knives were as fine as this and were in fact small penknives and not work knives.

In the general listings Robinson (1797) shows William as a Pen and Pocket knife cutler

I am surprised William is listed here as a pen knife cutler but he would have been capable, since the principles are the same.

I have not found any later directory listings but this is possibly because they were then making knives for other people, perhaps “Outworkers” for a Sheffield factory. Their own names would therefore not have been struck on the blades. This became common practice particularly at Stannington.<sup>81</sup>

Fig 23. 1841 Shotnell Census (The earliest detailed Census carried out on the 6th June)

Listed above are; William (Jnr) with wife Ann (nee Wilson?) Ann Tummons (nee Dyson) who married George Tummons (1814). Sarah must be the daughter of John.

Next door are Williams’s son John, his daughter Hannah and son William. John’s wife Susanna is not listed. Farming is not mentioned though

undoubtedly carried out.

A burglary took place in May 1841; but oddly newspaper reports<sup>82</sup> only mention the occupants as being William, his wife Ann, a lodger (Abbott) and John next door.

Fig.24. Shotnell Census 1851. Shows John and also John’s son, (another William b1824) as a cutler. Interestingly it also shows John had employed one man (unidentified).

Fig.25. The Shotnell Census 1861 shows John Dyson, a widower age 71 farming 10 acres. He may well have retired from the cutlery side or perhaps just not noted? He is with his daughter Mary (Scholes). A family named Moore have apparently moved in next door.

John’s son, William (b.1825) is no longer at Shotnell in the 1861 census. Instead we find he is a lodger at Tapton Hill near Broomhill (1861 Census). He is lodging with a cutler’s apprentice, and his neighbours are also listed as spring knife cutlers. There were at the time several old cottages on Stephen Hill that no longer exist.

I have been unable to find William in the 1871 or the 1891 Census but in the 1881 census he is at a boarding house in Broad Lane, near West Bar. We can only guess as to the reason for him leaving Shotnell. He is still listed as a cutler but we don’t know if or where he was working. He is 56 years old and in a profession that is tiring for the hands, legs and dependent on good eyesight. The cutlery trade was notoriously precarious with frequent downturns. The boarding house has seventy five lodgers listed on the 1861 Census.

Fig.26. Boarding House. Broad Lane. c1944 prior to its demolition. (Large tall building, fourth down) Picture Sheffield<sup>83</sup> Sheffield Libraries.

The 1901 Census shows that William is a pauper in a Sheffield Workhouse, age 76. He dies in 1905 at Fir Vale Workhouse, age 80. He does not appear to have a recorded grave and may have been interred in a mass grave, possibly at Burngreave.

Williams’s father, John retired to nearby Leavey Greav and died in 1873.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE FARM AND WORKSHOP AT SHOTNELL AND SOME COMPARISONS

The Workshop is difficult to locate but perhaps it is a safe assumption that the farm was established before any cutlery workshop considerations.

The 1901 map below shows more recent additions to the west of the dwellings and a barn which I believe is just visible in the photo below. If compared to the Fairbanks maps below, there was a long narrow building running alongside the track almost to the road.

Fig. 27. Map 1901 (O.S.) The ancient fields boundaries have now been very much removed.

Fig. 28. Close up Photo of the House prior to demolition showing a later addition which is evidently suffering from subsidence. The “lean to” may have been built partly for support and is itself buttressed (out of view).

Fig29. Fairbank Map<sup>84</sup> 1784 (Sheffield Archives FC/ECC/4L)  
Note the added detached part far right. This map and the one below represent periods of cutlery manufacture.

Fig.30. Fairbank Map<sup>85</sup> 1827. (Sheffield Archives FC/ECC/70L) It appears

that the entrance to the farm was initially between the two buildings. To the right is the barn and the more narrow part which I believe was the workshop

The building in front of the dwelling was obviously extensive and may well have included the workshop which would have had good aspect for light which would not penetrate far into a broad building. In more recent times, (see 1901 map) this building appears to be less than a quarter in length and would seem to be the larger left hand portion in the drawing and possibly always been a substantial barn. The narrow remainder was probably demolished when the workshop was no longer required.

Fig.31. Possible location and form of the workshop is illustrated at the far right. (Authors sketch 2012)

Based on the above maps and other local examples, the dwellings are based on the photographs.

Diane Foxton<sup>86</sup> remembers the large barn was used for farm work and storage.

From the various clues, the workshop could have had at least four workers at times and some family members would have probably worked during busy periods. It was not unknown for even wives and daughters to lend a hand during busy times. One daughter helped her father (Billy Barber) at High Bradfield (early1900s).<sup>87</sup>

Rural workshops could be a “lean to” type, “added on” or a separate structure. My reconstructed sketch, shown above is based on a separate workshop that has survived at Holdworth in Bradfield Parish. (Photo below) It is a building associated with an eighteenth century farmhouse (1725 date stone). Its history is, so far unknown but it may itself originate from the eighteenth century. It has undergone many alterations and shows evidence inside of a hearth though the chimney has been removed. It is about seven yards long. The one at Shotnell may well have been twice this length. The narrowness of both sites indicates the need for light within a workshop.

Figs. 32a and 32b. Workshop at Holdworth. (Photo by author 2011)

Fig.33. A cutler’s farmstead Situated at Syke near Dungworth. Bradfield Parish. Believed to have been worked by Elias Nichols, a Farmer-Cutler

(1851 Census, also listed as a Pocket Knife Cutler in 1856).The workshop was the building with the three open windows and could date back to the eighteenth century. There were two hearths but the chimneys have been removed. (Photo by Smith 1970s)

Fig.34. Workshop at Lower Hirst Farm Stubbing House and Shotnell would have been below Birley Edge, in the distance. Birley Edge hamlet is visible on the top of the edge, far right. Upper Hirst is along the lane to the left. (Photographed by Smith 1975)

Dennis Smiths notes say<sup>88</sup> that it was thought locally to be for file cutting or forging. He also says it may be contemporary with the house reckoned to be c1812. However, the use of these workshops often changed according to demand and I was told locally that the workshop was at one time connected to Upper Hurst. Note the two chimneys.

William Steel when writing about recollections in nineteenth century Birley Carr in 1907, mentions a Mr Watkinson who was a, “Blade maker and worked at a little shop at the Hirst”.<sup>89</sup> This suggests that he forged the blades and if so, a more précised date would have been interesting.

In 1824 there is an Ecclesfield Baptism Record; William, son of William Watkinson, Grinder of Hirst.<sup>90</sup> However, it is probable that he would not be grinding at Hirst, but on a wheel by the River Don.

William Beal, cutler, had an apprentice named Bradley at Hirst who becomes “Free” in 1635.<sup>91</sup>

Interestingly Morley<sup>92</sup> wrestled with the same problem in trying to place a Richard Mathyman, who lived at a place called “Hurst” below Birley Edge in 1613.

The Cutlers Company records show a Robert Mathyman, cutler with a son Richard becoming free in 1655, and another Robert becoming free in 1677. All are listed at Hirst.

Others mentioned by the Cutlers Company at Hirst include Briggs and Darling in the early 1700s and a little later we have several generations of a family named Turner.

Fig. 35. Ecclesfield Enclosure Map<sup>93</sup> 1789. Showing the Hurst Area (Sheffield Archives ACM S63)

The above map shows Stubbing House, top left. Shotnell , top middle.

Birley Edge Hamlet is far right. Below right is Upper Hurst then Lower Hurst. The many metal workers mentioned in this period must have been situated in the buildings shown on this map. Stubbing House Lane is marked on this map as Hunter House Lane.

## SOME NAMES AND EVENTS CONNECTED TO SHOTNELL

List below is extracted from census and graves. It is of course incomplete and may contain inaccuracies. Early Census age dates can often be approximate.

William Hey of Shotnal, Yoeman, 1613, Sheffield Manorial Records. Two houses.<sup>94</sup>

John Trickett a cutler has an apprentice named Thomas Satterfett (From Grenoside) at Shotnell in 1692.<sup>95</sup>

A century later a James Tricket is listed in the 1787 Gales and Martin Directory, as a Common Pocket Knife manufacturer at Birley Carr.

William Yates, cutler c1715.<sup>96</sup>

Jacob Roberts surrendered a messuage and close to James Longden a cutler in 1719 then “Shotnell is transferred to Joshua Bridges in November 1719”.<sup>97</sup>

John Parkin had three children at Shotnell some time prior to 1751 (Ecclesfield Parish Records) In the Cutlers Company Records he appears as a filesmith with a son John becoming a freeman in 1741, probably as

a file smith rather than a knife cutler. There is also a Joseph Smith from Grenoside, an apprentice to John in 1736.

Parkin is a common local name, but in 1797, a Thomas, son of John at Lane Head, is apprenticed to Joseph Garrett, cutler of Birley Edge.

Jeramiah Smith had a son at Shotnell, sometime prior to 1751<sup>98</sup>

John Booths daughter Hannah was born at Shotnell in 1751.<sup>99</sup> (Could this be the John Booth connected with the Walker iron founders mentioned previously?)

William Dyson (1701-1739) of Holme, Huddersfield was later described as a husbandman, “of the Chapelry of Bradfield” by the Cutlers Company. (Holme was likely to be the one next to Slaithwaite rather than the one in the Holme valley). He married Elizabeth DYSON from Wakefield in 1720 at Ecclesfield Church. At this time the Bradfield Chapelry was west of the River Don. He was probably never a Shotnell resident but his son is listed in the 1774 Sketchley Directory with “Hurst” as a location, almost certainly Shotnell.

Fig.36. The Marriage Registration in 1720 of “William Dyson of Huddersfield to Elizabeth Dyson of Wakefield” (Top line) at Ecclesfield Church. He appears to have been buried at Slaithwaite church, Colne valley in 1739. Probably a difficult two day journey in those days!

William Senior was actually the son of the above William from Holme but I have retained this description as with his son, Junior, as they are denoted as such in the referred to directories.

Despite the Ecclesfield grave inscription I cannot find an Ecclesfield birth record for William (b1726-1799) so he may have been baptised at Slaithwaite. Possible siblings are Ann (b1721) and John (b1722) both christened at Bradfield. John is perhaps unlikely given the family tradition of naming the first son William unless an earlier William died in infancy?

William Dyson (senior)	1726-1799	married 1750	Mary Jepson
-1799			
Children-			
Hannah	1751-		

George 1753-1774  
 Mary 1755-  
 Anne 1760-  
 \*William (Jnr) 1758-1841  
 \*Isaac 1763-1829  
 Rebecca 1765-

\* Families of these shown below

\*William (Junior 1758-1841) Married 1779 Ann Wilson 1759 -1850 (from Darfield?)

Children-

Sarah 1782 -1790  
 Mary 1775- married Horsefold (or Nicholson)  
 Charles 1778-  
 George 1782-1784  
 William 1784 -1785  
 Samuel 1785-1788  
 Ann 1787? married George Tummons 1814?  
 + John 1789-1873 married 1815 Sussana Parker 1797-1850  
 Hannah 1795-  
 James 1798-1823

\*Isaac (1763-1829). Married 1791 to Hannah DYSON. The Cutlers Company in 1792) lists him as a Knife Maker and gives Isaac's address as "Mertnall" Ecclesfield. "Ecclesfield Common" was marked on his, now lost grave.

Children-

Ann 1792-1819 "Shotnell" marked on grave. (Daughter Hanna in 1814?)  
 John 1795-  
 Eliz. 1797-  
 Mary 1799-1859 Ecclesfield Burial age 57?  
 Hannah 1802-  
 William 1804-1875 Deaf, barber in 1861, 71, Census. Stocks Hill  
 Sarah 1807-  
 Esther 1809-1869 Deaf, unmarked grave at Stanley, Wakefield

+John 1789-1873 Married 1815 Susanna Parker  
 1797-1850  
 Children-  
 Ann 1816-1880 Married 1839 George  
 Whitaker 1818-1891  
 Mary (Scholes 1861census?) 1818-1866  
 Sarah 1820-  
 Ellenor 1822-  
 William 1825-1905  
 xHannah 1828-1886 Married 1851 George Wyke  
 (1826-1906)

xHannah (above) 1828-1886 Married 1851 George Wyke  
 (1826-1906)  
 Children-  
 Sarah Wyke 1853-  
 Sophia Wyke 1854-1857  
 George Dyson Wyke 1857-1914 Married 1885 A Watson  
 (1855- 1935)  
 John Wyke 1863-  
 William Wyke 1865  
 Jane Sussana Wyke 1868 Married 1895 Farewell  
 Hebson  
 James Wyke 1870-

In 1861, +John Dyson (b 1789) is living with his daughter Mary Scholes at Shotnell (see fig.25 - 1861 Census above)  
 Next door are, Joseph Moore and family and is listed as an agricultural labourer. (See fig. 25 above)

In 1870, a valuation says, "Shotnell or the Hurst" is occupied by a George Whitaker and son. They appear to be farming with no mention of cutlery tools. It mentions a "shop" with an anvil and farming machinery.<sup>100</sup> Ann Dyson married George Whitaker in 1839, and they are living in Sheffield in 1871. (See Census below fig 37.)

Arthur Bridge and Eliza (nee Eyre) and family are shown on the 1881 census

Walter Bridge and Georgina (Eyre) and family are shown on the 1891 census.

I wonder if the Bridge family had retained ownership or otherwise connected to Joshua Bridge noted in 1719? (See page 13 above)

A Joseph Dyson from Shotnell is mentioned by Steel (1907) but no date is given and I cannot find a Joseph, I imagine that the name or location is an error.

Wragg<sup>101</sup> mentions the two families of Abraham Walker and Walter Bridge but gives no dates.

The Whitehouse family were the occupiers until demolition, as already mentioned.

Fig.37. The 1871 Census shows John Dyson has retired in Sheffield (no longer with Mary) but with his other daughter Ann Whitaker whose husband is a stag and horn scale dealer on a road called Leavey Greave in Sheffield. Scales are the sides of knives made from various materials such as bone or stag antler. I wonder if Ann met George Whitaker in the process of supplying scales to John at Shotnell? According to Geoffrey Tweedale (2014) the firm expanded and was on Rockingham St. It went on to supply all the major cutlery companies. It was carried on by a son, Charles Whitaker (1840-1895) and carried on as George Whitaker and Sons by descendants until the late 1950s.

Whites Directory lists Charles Walter Whitaker Stag & Scale Cutter Shotton Hall Grenoside

In 1851 Hanna Dyson marries George Wyke from nearby Skew Hill, Grenoside. Ecclesfield Parish records show that George and Hannah had a son named George Dyson Wyke b.1857. George, the father, is described in the Census as a "Tip maker" and gives Shotnell as their abode.

Perhaps he made Shuttle tips at Shotnell, or he may have used his brother's shop at Skew Hill, a mere twenty minute walk. The couple have moved there by 1861. Skew Hill Farm seems to have been quite large

and evidently had a large workshop. They operated as a company<sup>102</sup> and employed other workers.

Skew Hill Hamlet and adjoining Shaw Hill (the name appears interchangeable in the nineteenth century) also had many file cutting shops.

My great grandfather, Henry Dyson (Steel Refiner<sup>103</sup>) married George Wyke's sister, Hannah in 1863. George (senior) named on grave below, is therefore my great great grandfather.

Hannah Wyke was born at Lane Head 1n 1828 but was at Skew Hill by 1861. She is living there with her brother and listed as a dressmaker. She then marries Henry Dyson in 1863. One of their sons was called Henry Wyke Dyson. When I came across, the name, George Dyson Wyke, (above) I was initially confused being unaware of the old custom of using the mother's maiden name as a middle name, usually for the first born.

Fig.38 Shotnell grave at Ecclesfield

1861 Hanna and George have moved to Skew Hill where George along with other members of his family are making shuttle tips etc. The Wyke family tended to be metal workers and farmers. They were a predominant Grenoside family living in many parts of the village though none seem to reside there at the present day. Skew Hill Farm has been drastically altered and I cannot see any remains of a workshop. Another at the bottom of Stephen hill has been incorporated into the house. One at Lane Head is of some age and still exists.

Fig.39. Advert from an 1871 trade directory

Census records reveal that the Wykes were a very prolific and industrious family. Though today absent from the Grenoside. Some descendants are currently landlords of the, "Old Horns" at Bradfield and the "Blue Ball" at Wharncliffe Side. The former pointed out to me that there was a vicar of Ecclesfield called Arnaldus Wyke (around the year 1400). It is another local name.

Fig.40. 1901 Census.Hill Top. Grenoside.

The above Census shows Jane Susannah Hobson (nee Wyke, and daughter of Hanna Dyson) at Hilltop sometimes known as Holly House or St.Helena.

She is with her husband Farewell Hebson and her father George Wyke who is still listed as a shuttle tip manufacture at the age 76. I understand that unfortunately he was regarded by some as a burden (Pers.comm. 2012)

The walkers had an early connection with Holly House which was a collection of dwellings now demolished; only the foundations remain.

Fig.41. The Dyson Gravestone at Ecclesfield. Midway to the right of the path between the Lych Gate and the Church (transcribed fig.43 below)

Fig.42. Transcription from headstone (above) at Ecclesfield - .

*Here lieth the body of George the  
Son of Wm Dyson of Shotnal. He was  
Buried Nov Ist 1774 aged 21 years*

*Also Sarah Daughter of Wm Dyson  
Junr buried July 19th 1790*

*Also George son of Wm Dyson Junr.  
Who died 9th Oct 1794 age 2years and ? months*

*Also Wiliam son of Wm Dyson junr who  
Died July 1st 1785 aged 1 year  
And 8 months*

*Also Samuel the son of Wm jnr died  
Sept 22nd 1788 age 3 years*

*William Dyson snr departed this life  
Jan 10th 1799 age 73 years*

*Also Mary his wife departed this life  
29th March 1799 age ? years*

*Also James the son of Wm Dyson  
Jnr who died August 22nd 1823  
Age 25 years*

*Also Wm Dyson jnr died  
August 11th 1841 aged 83 years*

*Also Ann wife of the above named  
Wm Dyson who departed this  
Life Feb. 7th 1850 age 91 years*

*Also Mary Scholes grand daughter of  
the above who died sept 8th 1866  
age 48*

*Also John of Shotnal  
Who died Jan 7th 1873 aged 84*

## CONCLUSION

Whilst living at Penistone Road, Grenoside I remember my father's passing comment that we were related to some of the Wyke family living on the same road. This comment was to prove invaluable when researching my family tree. Many years later the "trail" led to Shotnell. My interest in the history of the old rural cutlers also led me to Shotnell.

Another early useful find was in the 1901 Census where I found a descendant of the Shotnell Dyson family; James Wyke was a son of Hannah Dyson of Shotnell and was listed as a "steel manager". He curiously was listed as a lodger to my grandfather Charles Thomas Dyson (1871-1934), an "Engine Tenter" at the Globe works. They are living in a terraced house at Barnaby Street, Hillsborough.

Tracing the different Dyson lines is not always easy because it a common "West Riding surname". We have at least two instances of marriages to another Dyson. The repetitive Christian names at Shotnell have also been a problem with at least seven generations of Williams!

I have a Wyke family connection but my Dyson line does not appear to relate to the Shotnell ones. There appears to be close ties and we were present in the Wadsley Bridge area, only a mile from Shotnell, from at least the early 1800s, and before that in the 1700s some of my ancestors were

cutlers at Worrall, within sight of Shotnell.<sup>104</sup>

The earliest William I found was Christened at Huddersfield in 1679 and died in 1720 at Slaithwaite. The next William (from Holme) was christened at Slaithwaite in 1701 and married another Dyson, Elizabeth (from Wakefield) at Ecclesfield Church in 1720. They then moved to Bradfield Chapelry where he was described as a "Husbandman" this was recorded with regard to his sons' indenture to a cutler in 1739.

Fig.43. The Birth of William of William. ie "William the husbandman of Bradfield" 1701 at Holme, Huddersfield. (Huddersfield Church Record and also recorded in a Slaithwaite Church record)

This all fits well with the theory that essentially all the Dysons originated from Linthwaite. (Slaithwaite is an adjoining village) Holme is common place name but it seems likely that this is either Upper or Lower Holme, only a mile from Slaithwaite church. (At first I thought it was the Holme at the head of the Holme valley). Farming here would have been marginal and perhaps they had a secondary occupation. Old workshops are still evident in the area though for the textile rather than metal trade. If the Dysons here were textile workers, there may be a parallel here with the Roberts family who it is thought had moved from Holmfirth to Stubbing House Farm with some members later becoming prominent metal workers.

Bradfield Parish is an area geologically similar, and as we have seen, also provided the opportunity of a secondary trade. If the Dysons were expanding from the Colne valley, as evidently they did, it may have been that there was not enough work for them all. Perhaps relatives or friends had already made the move to the Sheffield area and therefore set a precedent in exploring employment possibilities.

The first mention of Shotnell seems to be in 1613 but as far as cutlery manufacture is concerned our first known date is 1692, with the cutler, John Trickett. I think it likely that there were earlier cutlers before this date but they may have been recorded at the Hurst when in fact they may have been active at Shotnell.

We know that cutlery had been manufactured at Shotnell at least some fifty years before the Dysons appeared with several apprentices serving their time there. As already noted there is some evidence of file cutting in 1741 and again in 1801 when a James Wissham from Shotnall file smith, is recorded at York Goal.<sup>105</sup> There is also a possibility of some shuttle tip work

connected to the Wyke family.

A 1839 newspaper article<sup>106</sup> mentions a widow; Martha Walker of Shotnell and the tragic discovery of her dead son.

The biggest hurdle on entering the cutlery trade at that time was probably initiating and working through the apprenticeship system. However once established the Dysons cutlery activities extended at least through four generations. Starting with William, (b1726) he would have been a freeman around 1747 and perhaps already at Shotnell around this time.

The extent of the cutlery activities by the Dyson's at Shotnell is difficult to judge but it appears to have been significant and long running. The Cutlers Company records show that they had at least ten apprentices over a thirty five year period which may suggest some economic stability. We can only guess that they would have had some difficult times as the demand for cutlery would invariably fluctuate.

The cutlery trade at Shotnell may have become increasingly less lucrative and activities seem to have ended some time before 1871 with John moving to Sheffield to live with a daughter and son in law.

John's son William (b1826) had already moved to Sheffield by 1861 and worked as a cutler before dying as pauper in Firvale Workhouse in 1905 (The last Shotnell cutler and the last William). The boom period of pocket and penknives in Sheffield was already waning at this time, probably due to over capacity and serious foreign competition. The USA introduced a crippling import tariff in 1890.

I suspect that at various times at Shotnell several other family members helped to make knives at busy times, albeit informally. It is also possible that other, not yet identified descendants continued as cutlers, perhaps working in Sheffield. We know John's daughter Ann married a Stag supplier with descendants carrying on the firm.

Isaac Dyson (1763-1829) worked at Ecclesfield Common as a "knife maker" (CCR)

Fig.44. Cutlers Company Register. He is assigned the number 1467 in the year 1792

Isaac's son William Dyson (1804-1875) did not become a cutler. He was born "deaf and dumb" and worked at the Ecclesfield cotton mill and later as a barber at Stocks Hill (1861, 1871 Census). His sister Esther Dyson (1809-

1869) was also "deaf and dumb". Both were working at the Cotton Mill in 1830 when tragically, Esther was accused of infanticide and was tried at York Assizes. It was alleged that she threw her new born baby in Ecclesfield Dam. A notoriously difficult case to try but she was able to convey a plea of not guilty. She was deemed to be insane and lived the rest of her life in the Wakefield Pauper Lunatic Asylum where she showed, "no sign of insanity". Though often in poor health she worked in the Asylum as an under maid. She was buried at a Stanley Church Wakefield in an unmarked grave.<sup>107</sup>

Several cutlers' names have occurred in connection with Shotnell but we don't know if they all actually worked there. The regular occurrence of "cutlers" in records and documents is not surprising when you consider the high percentages of population that were involved with cutlery during these times, perhaps up to two thirds of the population. The number of people that passed through the farm is quite remarkable.

The Hurst area, nearby Birley Carr and Grenoside appeared to have had numerous cutlery workshops in the eighteenth century. These seem to have been much reduced by the late nineteenth century.

After cutlery activities finished at Shotnell, a few other local manufacturers continued a little longer such as at Grenoside. At the nearby hamlet of Lane Head the Furniss cutlery family survived towards the end of the nineteenth century. Their Stannington branch lasted longer probably due to their long established extended families.

The Garretts of Birley Edge, Whitley and Grenoside, also seem to have been a significant cutlery family. We know from a court case in 1843 that Joseph Garrett was fined for making counterfeit Samuel Barlow knives. He said that the blades were made by a neighbour and a copy of Samuel Barlow's mark stamp was used. In another case in 1864 his location is "Grenowoods" (Woodend).<sup>108</sup>

The small Skew Hill hamlet was surprisingly productive. According to Morley<sup>109</sup> we appear to have had, at some time, Maurice Rodgers, a member of the famous "Joseph Rodgers" family of cutlers. He also mentions the rise of the Smith family who went on to provide several Master Cutlers

The Shotnell Dyson family, seem to have suffered many premature deaths. But this was probably typical for these times. The grave stones perhaps reveal close family ties and the frequent reference to Shotnell seems to suggest a close bond with their home. This was perhaps unusual but I wonder if this was because they lived, and worked, in such a beautiful setting.

Cutlery working practices in rural areas at the time would have been fairly standard and the lack of information relating to Shotnell perhaps does not matter too much in this account.

We know little about the workshop but this again would also have been fairly standard. It would have been intriguing to know more about the building but I am confident that at least I have located its position. Its foundations are still visible and it would be interesting if perhaps one day in the future the site may be excavated.

In about the mid-nineteenth century, the Shotnell cutlery activity may have become economically unviable. This was eventually soon to be the case in all the other rural areas. At Shotnell however, activities ended earlier than many others. One reason may have been the dispersal of the family.

Whereas before, there seemed to have been a passing down of the trade from father to son, people began to marry and have children earlier. They were no longer tied to one area and there were more work opportunities. Another factor may have been the significant occurrences of more daughters than sons.

The farming side would also gradually lose its economic value and therefore not provide an alternative to cutlery manufacture. Hey noted that in Ecclesfield village by 1862, that farming had become a secondary occupation.<sup>110</sup>

Although there was a decline in rural cutlery, the opportunities in Sheffield would increase dramatically with new factories producing cutlery faster and more cheaply than ever before. Factories were better able to supply what was to become a vast, almost, world-wide market supplying quality knives as well as the work knives which had been the staple of the rural cutler.

I would not imagine a rural cutler would experience difficulty in finding work in Sheffield. It's said that they regarded themselves as equal to any cutler and indeed the "last cutler of Stannington, Jack Goodison, finished his working days as a quality inspector at Joseph Rodgers!"<sup>111</sup>

There would be little to stop cutlers changing their trade as new opportunities arose, especially if it meant earning more money. Sheffield underwent an unprecedented boom period with the prevailing factory system. However, conditions for many living and working in Sheffield appear to have been, "Dickensian" with cramped slum areas amid factories and dangerous working conditions.

The dreaded workhouse seemed to "loom large" for struggling cutlers who never seem to have ever been well paid. A letter published in *The Sheffield and Independent* in 1886 warns of cheap German imitation Sheffield knives, complete with corporate marks... "A remedy must be applied or all of our workmen will be candidate's for Firvale" (Workhouse).<sup>112</sup>

Although most cutlers would have been employed by a firm, some still retained their independence and worked as "Little Mesters", these men would either be totally independent or working as "outworkers" for the major firms. They often found themselves in fierce competition with their neighbours and often had to work at very low rates with no continuity as regards the security of future work.

Many rural cutlers gravitated to Sheffield and established famous firms, a good example being George Wostenholms IXL brand, often considered to be only second behind the reputation of Joseph Rodgers. Wostenholm started as an apprentice at Stannington.<sup>113</sup> Both these brands have survived to the present day,

It was the cheap but robust knives that first became the staple Sheffield's pocket knife industry and established the name "Sheffield". (Made in Sheffield, was to become a trademark in its own right). This reputation, perhaps, paved the way for all the other manufactured goods that were soon to follow.

Sheffield Steel production was largely an off shoot of the cutlery industry but was eventually to overshadow it gaining a worldwide reputation in its own right.

Thomas Fuller in 1662 said, that the most common knives of English people were made in Sheffield, and, "One may just wonder how a knife may be sold for one penny".<sup>114</sup> Today we can also wonder how emerging countries can make good serviceable knives for a very similar relative price. The answer is probably the same, cheap labour!

The Dysons probably made many thousands of knives yet I do not know of one in existence. The reason could be that, as work knives they were used until worn out, or lost. They were not likely to have been kept as a treasured possession and more probably regarded just as a tool, which of course they were. The example of the Sanderson knife probably only exists because it fell through the workshop floor!

Of this class of knife only those made by the Oats and Furniss families

tend to be in evidence, but these are found now almost exclusively in America!

It is said that about two thirds of the “Stannington Barlows” were exported to America and these were sent in very large numbers. Perhaps so too were the Dyson knives. The eighteenth century directories would no doubt have been seen in America as their own knife production was probably almost none-existent in the eighteenth century. Their knives would at the very least, have been distributed in the wider domestic market. Packhorse carriers had been in existence since at least Elizabethan times.<sup>115</sup> Carters were carrying long distances by the early 1700s, and by 1750s the canal had reached Tinsley.<sup>116</sup> By the mid-1800s the railway passing through the area at Wadsley Bridge.

Hey<sup>117</sup> identified how skills can be widely disseminated over time. I wonder how many of the Shotnell apprentices went on to teach others who then taught others, and so forth? A process no doubt helped by absence of the old rules of the Cutlers Company.

It would seem apparent that the rural cutlers, along with the other metal workers, had a great collective role in the emergence of Sheffield as a great industrial city.

Fig.43. The Hurst Area. (c1960s) Shotnell is the uppermost building, top right. Edgewell Lane is the faint track running diagonally and parallel to the field wall bottom right.

(Sheffield Newspaper photo, copy from K. Smyth)

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Also thanks to the encouragement of David Hey whose work has been heavily relied upon on in this work. Likewise Chris Morley and Dennis Smith.

Sheffield City Libraries

Church of L.D.S.

Foxton Diana

McQueen Anne

Machin Andrew

Morley Chris C.

Needham Roy

Nunn Malcolm

Palmer Mavis

Pashley Clive

Pickard Elaine

Wyke Roy

Lawley. Trevor & Ann

Newry Ivan

Reaney Norma

Rodgers Harold

Tweedale Geoffrey

Hall Phillip.

Hawley Ken

Jones Joan and Mel

Youle Eic (Website)

Unwin Joan

Smith Dennis J.

Smyths of Upper Hurst Farm

If anyone can add anything, no matter how small I would be delighted to learn more.

There will have been errors and there still remain many questions to be answered.

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I have now completed another account of Farmer Cutlers (2014) who were located at Worrall and Bingley House Farm at Stannington in the Rivelin valley.

“The Dyson Cutlers of Worrall and Bingley House Farm 1728-1830”.

## APPENDIX

(includes information  
found up to 2014)

### Apprentices at Shotnell-

Bailey William son of Moses, Burncross, to Dison (Dyson) William, Shotnall, cutler, 7 years, 1783, F. 1791.

Bassinder Daniel son of Daniel, Retford, weaver dec. to Dyson William, Shotnall, cutler, 1775

Briggs, Benajmain son of Samuel, Grenoside, tailor to Dyson, Wm. Snr. Shotnall, knifemaker, 1792 or 1799

Briggs, Thomas son of Samuel, Grenoside, tailor to Dyson, Wm. Snr. Shotnall, knifemaker, 1783

Earnshaw George, a poor boy to Dyson William, Shotnall, Ecc, k, 1799

Fullilove, Matthew son of Thomas, Thorpe, col, to Tate William Shotnall fi, 7, 1780

Hadfield John son of James, Whaley Bridge to Dyson, William Shotnall c, 7, 1772

Howarth, James son of James, Shiregreen, h, to Dyson William, Shotnall, c, 7-8, 1780, F 1796

Lun, George son of, David, Birley Carr, shoemaker to Dyson William jnr. Shotnall, k, 7-8, 1792

Senior, George son of, Oxspring, to Dyson, William, Shotnell, 1765.

Walker, Mathew son of, Anthony, c, to Dyson William, Shotnell, c, 7-9, 1779.

Ward, Jos son of James, Dodworth, late river, dec, to Dyson , Shotnell, k, 10-6, 1799.

Shotnell 1966

Shotnell from the Hurst, note the barn at the right, 1900? (Courtesy Andrew Machin)

The article below mentions the bankruptcy of Messers Kirkby's and Kenyon's, silver platers. (See pp14) The naming as Shotten Hill is interesting as is perhaps also the mention of "Workshops", plural. (Article supplied by Tweedale 2014)

Sheffield and independent 06.11.1841

Sheffield and Independent July 31st 1886. The farm was sold again.

Sheffield and Rotherham Independent 27.04.1839. William Walker found dead.

Sheffield Independent 29.05.1841 Robbery

Sheffield & Rotherham Independent (Sheffield, England), Saturday, July 17, 1841

Bradford Observer 29.07.1841 Transportation

With a fourteen year sentence they would almost certainly not have returned back from exile.

Esther Dyson (1808 -1869) Daughter of Isaac. (Probable Location of “Mertnall”)

Whilst writing “The Sad Case of Esther Dyson” 2014 (the deaf daughter of Isaac who was born at Shotnell) I believe at last discovered the location of Mertnall. It was listed as the residence and workplace of Isaac, a knifemaker in Ecclesfield (CCR).

In 1830 Esther and her brother William (Both deaf) lived in a “small cottage near the mill” which I believe still exists on Whitley Lane and probably where their father Isaac worked and lived in up to his death. A sale plane of Ecclesfield Mill, though rather diagrammatic, appears to show a workshop attached to the far end. In more recent times it has been replaced by a house extension. At the time this area was considered part of Ecclesfield Common, which was reportedly marked on Isaac’s grave, now lost. Despite appearances a current occupier has deeds that go back to the eighteenth century; unfortunately it only lists the owners of the property.