

The Widdowson Name

The family name *Widdowson* clearly means he who is the son of the widow. It has had many other spellings, such as *Widdeson*, *Widdison* and *Widderson*. Precise spelling was less important centuries ago. There was also a name *Fatherless*, which has died out.

For several hundred years after the Normans invaded England in 1066, names were in French. Perhaps the earliest reference to a Widdowson is *Simon fil Vidue* (Simon son of the widow), recorded on the Hundreds Roll in 1275.

By the early 1300's names were anglicised. In this form our name first appears in Britain in 1309 where *Richard Wyduesone* is recorded in the county of Bedfordshire. Our spelling, *Widdowson*, was first recorded in Essex in the year 1326 and there are numerous mentions of the name in the following centuries, especially in the counties of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire:

- In 1478 Sir William Wydosan was the original chaplain of the Babington Chantry at Flawford and Chilwell.
- In 1494 a Nicolas Widosan made fish boards for the town of Nottingham.
- In 1538 Richard Widdowson appeared before the Nottingham court for adultery with a servant.
- Gabriel Wydoson was the Mayor's Clerk in 1578.
- In 1587 Nycoles Wydosu was "baptised at home in time of necessity".
- A William Wydoson was appointed Sheriff in 1594.
- On the 10th of August 1574 a Bartholomew Widson (or Wydeson) of Lowdham county, Nottingham, was granted a coat of arms (at right); but at this stage no direct descent from him has been established.



Our antecedents came from the Nottingham region of England where the greatest number of Widdowsons appears to have lived in the 18th and 19th Centuries. Our branch of the family came from the area north-west of Nottingham, mainly *Hucknall* and *Kimberley*. Hucknall, 10km north of Nottingham, was called *Hucknall Torkard* until 1916.



1. Robert (1) WIDDOWSON - about 1710 – 1783

Up to now this is the earliest known Widdowson from whom we are directly descended. When land was enclosed in England in 1769, Robert appears on the record as a tenant farmer of Lord Byron, great uncle of the poet:

The Byron Estate made a list of their tenants in 1767. Robert Widdowson (1710-1783) had the tenure of an old enclosure called Blake Hall. This was a piece, or parcel, of land containing approximately 11 acres 5 perches or thereabouts. It was situated at Hucknall Torkard, bounded by an old inclosure called The Nabbs and an allotment on Hucknall Common.

A further list drawn up in 1771 records *Robert Widdison* paying £16.00.00 for half a year's rent. This would have been a substantial sized farm.

It is not known whether Robert was from this area originally but it is possible. In 1900 Thomas

Widdowson of Portland Farm said that the Widdowson family had farmed the same land for some 300 years. This would indicate that Robert's father was also a farmer of the Hucknall, or Bulwell area, although no earlier proof of the existence of the family has been found to date.

Robert WIDDOWSON married **Mary BAMFORD** on the 12th November 1738 at the village of Gotham, Nottinghamshire. They had the following children:

1. Sarah baptised 9 Dec 1739 Radcliffe upon Trent
2. Ann baptised 2 May 1742 Radcliffe upon Trent
3. Mary baptised 20 Jan 1745/6 Lenton
4. Elizabeth baptised 8 Oct 1749 Hucknall Torkard
5. **Robert baptised 12 May 1754 Hucknall Torkard**
6. Francis baptised 1 Jun 1758 Hucknall Torkard

(In each case we are directly descended from the person marked in **bold**)

Robert and Mary seem to have spent the first few years of their marriage at Radcliffe upon Trent, where their first two children, Sarah and Ann, were born - Sarah in 1739 and Ann in 1742. In 1745 a daughter Mary was baptised at Lenton. From there they moved to Hucknall Torkard where they finally settled. Here, three more children were born; Elizabeth in 1749, Robert in 1754 and Francis in 1758.

In 1767 Robert apprenticed his son Robert (who would have been 13 years old) to a George Carrier, Baker, of the Town of Nottingham, for the term of seven years. For this apprenticeship Robert paid the sum of ten pounds. This may indicate that Robert already grew and milled his own wheat and wished his son to learn the trade of milling and baking.

Robert and Mary both lived to be over 70; Robert died in 1783 and was buried at Hucknall Torkard. Mary died in May 1785 aged 73.



2. Robert (2) WIDDOWSON 1754 – 1800

Robert Widdowson, eldest son of Robert and Mary Widdowson of Hucknall Torkard, was baptised on the 12th of May 1754. At the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to a baker in Nottingham by the name of George Carrier. The apprenticeship was for a period of seven years and cost £10.

Having completed his seven years apprenticeship, Robert became a Burgess (freeman) to the City of Nottingham and returned to Hucknall Torkard where, with the help of his father, he established a corn mill and bakery. He soon became a successful miller, entrepreneur and landowner.

In 1778 Robert married Ann MELLERS at Hucknall Torkard. Ann was the daughter of Paul (a farmer) and Ann Mellers. Robert was 24 years old and Ann 32. A witness was William Buck, his brother-in-law (husband of his eldest sister, Sarah) and lifelong friend.

Robert and Ann had the following children:

1. Ann baptised 13 February 1780. Died 16 March 1795 aged 15 years.
2. Francis baptised 15 April 1781.
3. **Robert baptised 1 September 1782**
4. William baptised 21 March 1784. Died 8 March 1788 aged 4 years.

From 1780 until 1791, the Land Tax records for Hucknall Torkard show that Robert Widdowson paid tax as a tenant, both to the Duke of Devonshire and to the Duke of Portland. In 1791 he was also appointed as an Assessor and Collector of Taxes.

Robert was a tenant farmer on the Portland Estate and his farm – Portland Farm – was situated close to the town centre. He also owned a windmill and in 1789 purchased several plots of land from William Standley, the then licensee of *The Red Lion*. These plots lay adjacent to his farm adjoining the Watnall Road called *Torkard Hill*. Here he erected a number of houses - twenty dwellings facing Watnall Road - and a further fourteen nearby which became known as *Widdowson's Buildings*. He also set himself up as a 'Hosier', owning several stocking frames that he rented out to the cottagers. He was a member of the Mansfield Troop of Yeomanry Cavalry and in 1792 was appointed Constable of Hucknall Torkard, a highly respected position.

In September 1799 his wife Ann died, aged 53. In the months following her death Robert must have worried a great deal about his two sons, Francis and Robert. In January 1800, in failing health himself, he drew up a Will appointing two trusted friends, Henry Attenborough and Thomas Wright, both farmers of Beeston, as Executors of his Will. This was to ensure that his two friends could help run his businesses until both his sons turned 21. His wish was that the boys would divide the farm between them, so that they could carry on farming with two separate farms providing that the landlord, the Duke of Portland, would agree.

To Francis he left the twenty newly erected houses, which brought in a yearly rent of £58. To Robert he left another fourteen dwellings, to the east of those left to Francis. These brought in a yearly rent of £57.

To Francis he also left his Corn Mill and the millstones, machine running gear, sails, rigging tackle, working tools, implements, utensils and all other possessions, including many bags of corn. Also, five stocking frames and hosiery, with the jack moulds, sinker moulds and other equipment.

To Robert, he left the remaining stocking frames that he possessed at the time of his death. Francis was left the tenure of the farm and lands, with a request to the Duke of Portland to accept Francis as the tenant. Robert was left the sum of £599, silver plate, furniture and other household effects.

Robert Widdowson died 27th February 1800 at the age of 46. He was buried at the Church of St Mary's, Hucknall Torkard alongside his wife, Anne, who had been buried just 5 months earlier. In his relatively short life he had achieved a great deal and had become a very wealthy gentleman. Of his two sons, it was Robert, the younger, who inherited his drive and capacity for hard work.

3. Robert (3) WIDDOWSON 1782 – 1846



Robert, youngest son of Robert Widdowson and Ann Mellers, was born at Hucknall Torkard and baptised there on the 1st of September 1782. He was 18 years old when his father died in 1800. Together with his brother, Francis, he inherited the farm, corn mill and stocking frames that his father had by then acquired.

Robert married Hannah Allcock, daughter of William and Mary Allcock of Linby on the 13th February 1803 at Linby Parish Church. He was 21 years old and Hannah was 23.



After their marriage they lived at the Half Moon Inn at Hucknall Torkard and at that time Robert was described as a Victualler (innkeeper). The children were all born at the Half Moon Inn apart from William who was born at his mother's family home in Linby. Robert and Hannah had the following children:

1. **William** born 24 October 1803 at Linby – became miller of Kimberley.
2. John born at Hucknall. Baptised 4 August 1805 – miller and baker of Hucknall
3. Reuben born at Hucknall. Baptised 20 May 1807 – Butcher in Nottingham
4. Ann born at Hucknall. Baptised 22 January 1809 – Farmer in Newstead
5. Robert born at Hucknall. Baptised 29 April 1810 – Hosier & postmaster in Hucknall
6. Levi born at Hucknall on 10 February 1812 – Butcher & Victualler in Hucknall.
7. James born at Hucknall. Baptised February 1815 – Master of Hucknall.
8. Sarah baptised at Hucknall 7 Jul 1817, buried 6 Oct 1817
9. Mary born at Hucknall 1818 – Farmer in Papplewick.

Robert was an enterprising and successful man, being described as a 'driving force'. During his lifetime he was a farmer, miller, baker, butcher, seeds man, quarryman, lime burner, cattle dealer, maltster and hosier. He also owned several houses that he had inherited from his father providing him with a good yearly rental. His eldest son, William, was once quoted as saying of his father; "I never saw him in a hurry. In the season he generally went a-coursing one day a week". He flourished in all his businesses and his sons continued his enterprises, all becoming equally successful and hard working.

Around the year 1836, Robert built a large house for himself on his land at The Connery, Hucknall Torkard. The site of the house was situated at the top of Baker Street at the junction of Annesley Road. It was a large "Georgian style" residence with bay windows and a large formally laid out garden and was known as 'Mount Pleasant'. The land attached to the garden led to his quarry, windmill, malt house and stocking factory. He also built a row of cottages across the yard. These were at first known as *Widdowson's Quarry* but later called *Mill Row* where his Employees, who worked at the mill, bakery and quarry lived.

In 1823 Records show that he was granted a Licence as the landlord of The Half Moon Inn, to sell liquor. In 1839, on the marriage of his daughter, Mary, Robert described himself as a farmer. In 1841 the Census shows Robert and Hannah as living at Mount Pleasant, Hucknall Torkard. Their son, James, was the only one still at home and was described as a maltster.

Robert died at the age of 63 from epilepsy, a disease he had suffered from for many years. The Nottingham Review printed the following obituary:- *8th May 1846 - On the 5th instant, at Hucknall Torkard, Robert Widdowson, Gent, aged 63. Previous to a long affliction, which he endured with much fortitude, he was a person of remarkably industrious and persevering habits; and in all relations of husband, parent and neighbour, his loss will be deeply deplored by a very large circle of friends and acquaintance.*

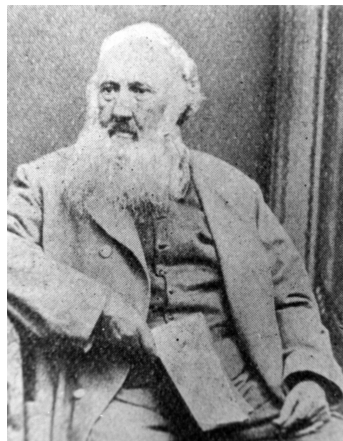
Robert was buried in the Churchyard of St Mary Magdalene at Hucknall Torkard on the 8th May 1846. Hannah lived to be over 80, passing away in 1863.

4. William Widdowson 1803- 1870

William Widdowson, eldest son of Robert Widdowson and Hannah Allcock, was born October 24th, 1803.

William grew up with his family in Hucknall but appears to have moved around at least from the time of his marriage. Their first child was born in his wife's hometown.

According to an account written by their son, Rev. William Reuben, in his old age, they lived five miles from Nottingham (presumably Strelley) from 1829 to 1833 and then moved to Kimberley where his father established a windmill on an elevated site called The Lawn.



MARRIAGE

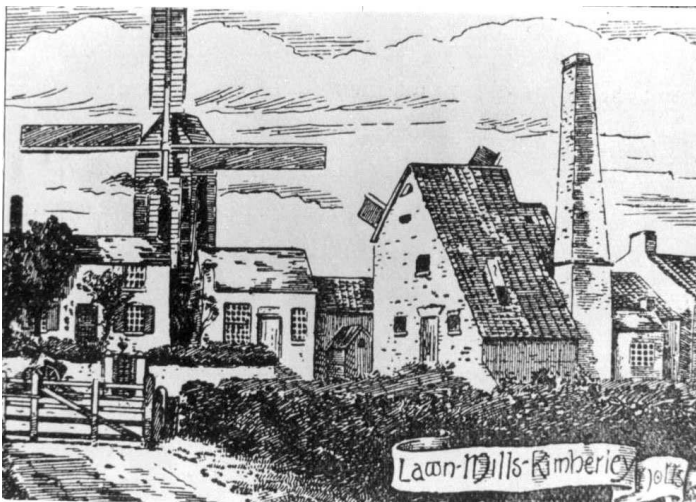
William married Margaret Haslam (born 1807 in Hardstoft, Derbyshire) on the 23rd of October 1825. She was four years his younger and they had their first child when Margaret was 19. This was William Reuben who became the Methodist minister and father of Alfred who came to Australia.

CHILDREN

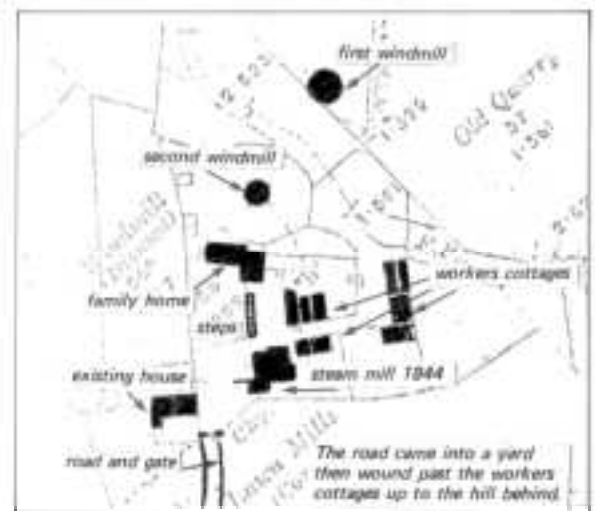
1. **William Reuben born 1826** Hardstoft or Ault Hucknall, Derbyshire. Bp 28 Aug 1826.
2. Sarah (known as Sally) bp 26 Sep 1828 Mansfield. Died before 1841
3. John bp 18 Apr 1832 Mansfield. Bur 12 Dec 1851 age 19 Kimberley
4. Levi bp 10 Aug 1834 Strelley
5. James bp 7 Aug 1837 Strelley
6. Hannah bp 22 Sep 1839 Greasley
7. Robert Albert bp 7 Mar 1842 Greasley
8. Mary bp 28 Jun 1844 Greasley died Kimberley 1845 (twin)
9. Margaret bp 28 Jun 1844 Greasley died 13 Jun 1845 Kimberley (twin)
10. Thomas bp 11 Jun 1846 Greasley
11. Alfred Paul b 1849. Bur Kimberley 20 Apr 1851 aged 2

H.A. Mather says, in his *Story of Kimberley*:

In the early 1800's a large windmill was brought from Hucknall and erected on the launde, now called the Lawn. Mr William Widdowson came to this mill from Strelley Mill in 1834 and business increased so rapidly that a second windmill was brought from Nottingham Forest and in 1844 a further mill was erected driven by a six horse power steam engine.



The Widdowson Mill in the 1800s



Plan of the mill.

William died in 1870 aged 66 and was buried in Kimberley.

5. Rev. William Reuben Widdowson 1826 - 1910



William was born in August 1826 at Hardstoft, Derbyshire - his mother's hometown. He joined the Methodist church at the age of 13 and became a Minister of the Primitive Methodist Church at 23. He served in the Church for 42 years at 20 different places, moving every two years or so.

On the 2nd of May, 1854, at the age of 27, he married Sarah Shepherd. Sarah was born 14th April 1826, at Welbourn, Lincolnshire. Her mother died in her childhood and Sarah soon had the responsibility of the household. Her father was a farmer, and his barn was used for Methodist church services, the preacher staying at their house. Sarah was converted to Christianity at "a camp meeting love feast in 1837" when she was 10 years old.



Many of the stations where the reverend ministered were very poorly paid and the family obviously experienced hardship. They had the following children:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. William Haslam | Born 1855 at Kimberley - became railway clerk, Euston station |
| 2. Alfred Shepherd | Born 2.6.1856 at Fleet, Lincolnshire - migrated to Australia |
| 3. John Edwin | Born 1858 at Fleet, Lincolnshire - became station master, Northampton. |
| 4. Margaret Haslam | Born 12.7.1859 at Fleet, Lincolnshire - migrated to Canada, married a builder called Chamberlain and had 13 children. |
| 5. Thomas Shepherd | Born 14.12.1863 at Fleet, Lincolnshire - became Inspector of Schools. Died of Parkinson's disease at the age of 34. |



Golden Wedding Tribute

For 50 years he has had in Mrs. Widdowson a true helpmeet. By her sterling piety she has won the esteem and respect of all who have become acquainted with her and in manifold ways she has rendered splendid service to the Church of Christ and Primitive Methodism. While travelling in the Nottingham Circuit, the newly-married couple had as salary nineteen shillings per week, but owing to the distress that followed the Crimean War they had to go short at times of even this small allowance. They next removed to Spalding and Holbeach, which had just previously been made a branch of the Donnington Circuit. At that time it was an exceedingly poor station, the minister's salary was small, even for those days, and bread was sold at thirteen pence for the four-pound loaf. As our friend spent three-fourths of his ministry on the Home Missions, many of his stations have been characterised by poverty and difficulties; yet, through the blessings of Almighty God on his labours, he has invariably left them materially, financially and spiritually improved.

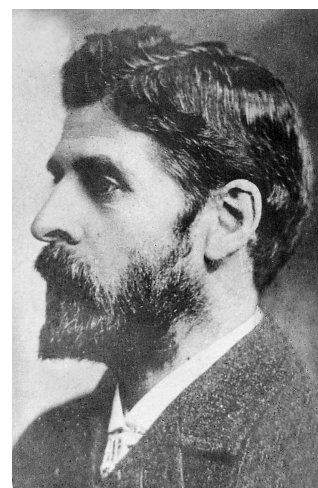
After Sarah died in 1908 aged 82, William had only two ambitions left - to visit his son Alfred who had settled in Tasmania and his daughter Maggie, who lived in Canada. This he did in 1908 and 1910 respectively. He died at Watford on the 9th of July 1910 at the age of 83.

6. Alfred Shepherd Widdowson 1856 - 1908



Alfred Shepherd Widdowson, the second son of the Rev. William Reuben Widdowson, was born at Fleet, Lincolnshire on the 2nd of June 1856. After a period of working in London, Alfred set sail for Australia on the *Thermopylae* arriving in Melbourne on the 4th of June 1881, just after he had turned 25 years old.

His fiancé, Emily Wimble (born 6th of December, 1856, in Bermondsey, London), followed him to Australia in 1882. *More details about their voyages, including diaries, can be found in the original booklet.*



Alfred and Emily married at Low Head, Tasmania on 17th October 1882 and settled in George Town, where their eight children were born. (Most of their descendants now live in the Launceston region, see map at right). Alfred established the Widdowson Store and Bakery, which adjoined the family home. Later they moved to *Watford*, where Alfred planted an orchard. Alfred died in April 1909; he was 53. Emily died six years later, on 31st of March 1915, age 58.



CHILDREN OF ALFRED & EMILY

- 1. Alfred Wimble Widdowson**, born 28th July 1883, went to Melbourne to serve an apprenticeship as a baker and then returned to George Town, taking over the family business and starting a bakery at the back of the store. He married Hilda Sarah Lugton (1885 – 1975) in Melbourne in 1908 and they had eight children. Alfred died May 8th 1953.
- 2. William John Widdowson**, born 12th November 1884, moved to Melbourne to train to become a carpenter and joiner. He remained there, marrying Alice Mary Maud Greer (1885 – 1945) in 1908 and having three children. William died May 1957.
- 3. Walter Widdowson** was born 4th January 1887 and became a Chemist in Launceston. He married Olive Ruby Abott and they had two children, Alan and Brian. Walter died in 1960 and Olive in 1963.
- 4. Frederick Widdowson**, born on the 11th of October 1888, became a road worker, a boat builder and then a farmer at *Lebrina*, before becoming a tram driver in Launceston. He married Lucy Anderson (1891- 1973) in 1910. They had eight children; their eldest, Fred, died in Changi Prison in 1943. Frederick died in 1960.
- 5. Lois Emily Widdowson**, born 22nd June 1890, stayed on at *Watford* after her mother died. She married Albert Reginald Quinn (1890 – 1952) and they had three children. Lois died in 1952.
- 6. Edith Annie Widdowson** was born 14th February 1893. At the age of 21, she married Tasman Philp, (1886 – 1951) whom she had met through the Methodist Church. They settled in Deloraine and then Launceston and had four children. Edith died in 1949.
- 7. Dorothy Alice Widdowson** was born 19th September 1895. After Emily's death in 1915, Dorrie went to live with Alf as she was working in the Widdowson general store. She married Edgar James (Tim) Saggars (1891 – 1964), a postmaster, and they had three children. Dorothy died in 1964.
- 8. Margaret Shepherd Widdowson (Madge)** was born 4th September 1899. She left home (*Watford*) after her mother's death and went to Launceston, where she trained at a secretarial college and held several secretarial positions until she was old enough (21) to take up nursing. At the time of her marriage (1928) she was acting Matron at the Devon hospital, Latrobe. She married Geoffrey Ashburner Littler (1892 – 1983) and they had three children. Madge died in 1988.