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## THE WHITSTABLE COPPERAS INDUSTRY

By ROBERT H. GOODSALL, F.R.I.B.A.

IN *The Merry Guide to Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs*, published about 1825, the author, "Bernard Blackmantle"<sup>1</sup> wrote:

"Near the sea shore at Tankerton, six copperas houses formerly stood, only one of which now remains, the cliff whereon they were erected having gradually loosened by the encroachments of the sea; here the manufacture of copperas used to be carried on to some extent, but owing to the above-named circumstances, and the cheapness of the article in the north of England and elsewhere, the works have been for some time disused."

Earlier another writer<sup>2</sup> had referred to "the black and dismal appearance of the copperas buildings" which "excite disgust rather than curiosity".

Hasted contains a brief reference to the subject: "About half a mile from the street, near the sea shore and Tankerton are six copperas-houses, where the manufacture of copperas, or green vitriol, is carried on." To-day all visible traces of the works have long since disappeared and local memory is unable to recall details of this bygone trade of many generations of Whitstable folk. However, thanks to the kindness of Mr. W. M. Bishop, L.R.I.B.A., of Whitstable, the writer has had the opportunity of examining upwards of seventy most interesting deeds and writings in his possession which trace the ownership of the Copperas Works and the land upon which they stood. These documents provide many hitherto unknown or forgotten details concerning the manufacture, and above all furnish evidence of the considerable size and importance of the copperas trade to the district in past centuries.

An old work, published in 1835, *The British Cyclopaedia*, provides the following information:

"COPPERAS OR GREEN VITRIOL is a mineral substance, formed by the decomposition of pyrites by the moisture of the atmosphere. Its colour is bright green, and its taste very astringent. A solution of it in water, dropped on oak bark, instantly produces a black spot. Copperas is occasionally found in grottoes, caverns, the galleries of mines, and other places. It is much in request with dyers, tanners and the manufacturers of ink, and, for their use, is artificially prepared from

<sup>1</sup> C. M. Westmacot, a scurrilous gossip-writer. He was responsible for *The English Spy*, a collection of essays illustrated by Robert Cruickshanks.

<sup>2</sup> Fussell, *Journey on the Coast of Kent*.

pyrites. This mineral, being moistened and exposed to the air, a crust is formed upon it, which is afterwards dissolved in water: from this the crystals of vitriol are obtained by evaporation. The principal use of vitriol is in dyeing woollen articles, hats, etc. black. It is the basis of ink, and is used in the manufacture of Prussian blue. If it be reduced to powder by the action of fire in a crucible, and mixed with powder of galls, it forms a dry portable ink," and—the writer continued—"In copperas there is *not one particle of copper*. It is, in truth, a *sulphate of iron*."

During the Middle Ages copperas was much used as a dressing for scab in sheep. In 1320 at Boxley, near Maidstone, 2 lb. of "coperose" were sold for 6d. But the principal uses were not only for the dyeing of wool, cloth, and hats and making ink, but also for tanning and dressing leather and for producing oil of vitriol and "Spanish brown" for painters.

At Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour, Celia Fiennes, during her Dorset journey in 1685, came upon a copperas works and penned the following description:<sup>1</sup>

"From thence (Poole) by boate we went to a little Isle called Brownsea 3 or 4 leagues off, where there is much Copperice made, the stones being found about the Isle in the shore in great quanteties, there is only one house there which is the Governours, besides little fishermens houses, they being all taken up about the Copperice workes; they gather the stones and place them on ground raised like the beds in gardens, rows one above the other, and are all shelving so that the raine dissolves the stones and it drains down into trenches and pipes made to receive and convey it to the house; that is fitted with iron pannes foresquare and of a pretty depth at least 12 yards over, they place iron spikes in the pannes full of branches and so as the liquid boyles to a candy it hangs on these branches: I saw some taken up it look't like a vast bunch of grapes, the coulleur of the Copperace not being much differing, it lookes cleare like sugar-candy, so when the water is boyled to a candy they take it out and replenish the pannes with more liquor; I do not remember they added anything to it only the stones of Copperice dissolved by raine into liquour as I mention'd at first; there are great furnaces under, that keepe all the pannes boyling; it was a large room or building with severall of these large pannes; they do add old iron and nails to the Copperass Stones."

The first factory in Kent for making copperas appears to have been set up at Queenborough by one Mattias Falconer, a native of Brabant,<sup>2</sup> but the process was known much earlier. In 1565 a patent was granted

<sup>1</sup> *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, Christopher Morris. Cresset Press, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1639, p. 489.

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to Cornelius Stephenson for making copperas at Whitstable,<sup>1</sup> the industry being regulated by statute.<sup>2</sup>

Stephenson had as a partner a man called Biddulph or Bedel, alias Bedolph. When the former died his widow married Thomas Gauntlett and Biddulph obtained a lease from Sir John Fortescue of sulphur stones to make copperas<sup>3</sup>, by the expedient of assuming Gauntlett's name, or so it was alleged at proceedings started in 1599. A witness in the suit stated that Stephenson "first found out means to use certain gold stones, otherwise sulphur stones, which were gathered in the beach of the sea for making copperas."<sup>4</sup>

At that time there were twenty poor people of Whitstable and the adjoining parishes put to work to gather pyrites, their wages being paid to them daily.<sup>5</sup>

In 1569 Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to Sir William Cecil on the subject of copperas. It would seem that the "poor man" to whom he referred was none other than Cornelius Stephenson. "This poor man cometh to me and signifieth that by the counsel of a stranger whom he hath kept in his house, and by his own cost and industry, he hath found out the making of brimstone, whereof he bringeth an assay, and saith further that the stuff where he gathereth it on the shore of Whitstable is so fat, that it will yield so well that it will rise to a good comodity, and nothing so chargeable as hath been elsewhere proved to be."

The Archbishop's interest in the matter is not explained, but as copperas was used in the production of writing ink, he may have regarded a local source of supply of this useful commodity a matter of some value to the Cathedral scribes!

Among the State Papers Domestic of the first Elizabethan period in the Public Record Office is a short report on the making of brimstone along the coast of Kent.<sup>6</sup>

"Briefe Notes for the makinge of brimstone wherby may appeare what benifite is lickly therbie to growe to her mat<sup>tie</sup> this her Comonwealthe and to her highnes patentees warrantede by the triall and experience latelie had in the painefull and costlie folowinge and searchinge oute of the same.

firste for the use of Brimstone it is greate w<sup>th</sup>in this Comonwealthe and

<sup>1</sup> *Exch. Dep. East 42 Eliz.*, Co. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Stat. 8 Eliz.*, cap. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Exch. Dep. East 42 Eliz.*, No. 14.

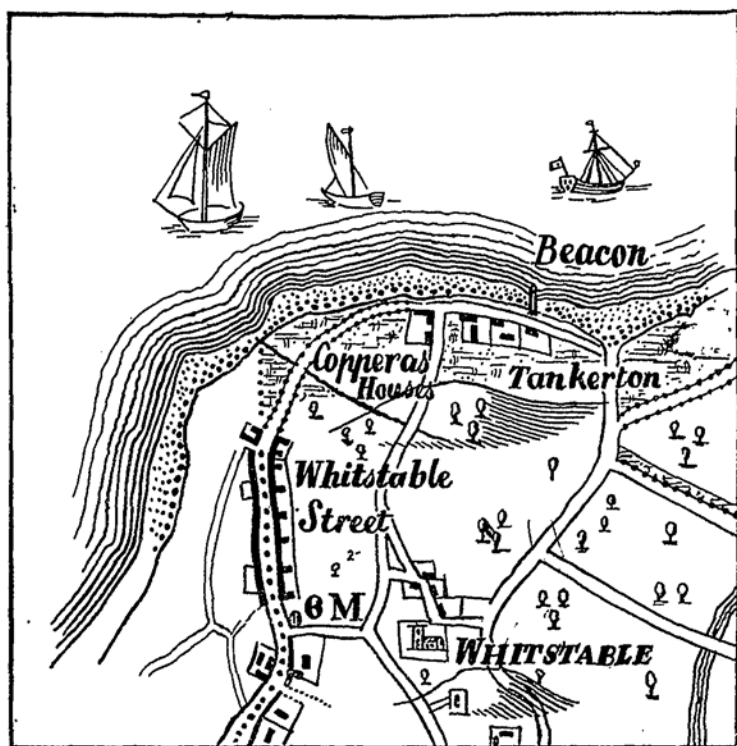
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *S.P. Dom. Elizabeth (S.P.12) 167*, No. 56.

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growethe dailie more by reason that the same hath of late been much Employede and occupiede about the Tryminge and Dressinge of shippes and other small vessels. The same is likewise good m<sup>ch</sup>andize at Rochells Flaunders and other neare parts to this Realme; what quantitie this realme will consume yerlie we knoweth not certainlie but we gesse that 300000 will be the Leaste makinge the proportion thus C<sup>r</sup> 100000 for the makinge of Gonedpowder, a 100000 about the Shippes



and 100000 solde by Retaile throughe the whole lande, for diu<sup>r</sup>se other purposes and I doubte not but a 100000 may be ventede abroad to her mat<sup>ies</sup> friends w<sup>ch</sup> is all this 400000.

Concerninge the makinge of the same yt is Drawen out by force of the fyre of suche stones as here we p<sup>sent</sup> to y<sup>r</sup> hon<sup>rs</sup> wherof we fynd sufficient quantytie upon the Coastes of the Isle of Sheppey Whitstable and other Coasts therabouts to o<sup>r</sup> Jugm<sup>t</sup> to make the said quantytie of Brymston yerlie duringe the yers Containede in the p<sup>at</sup>tente the w<sup>ch</sup> we p<sup>re</sup>sume because we find the stone supplide in shorte tyme wher we have gathered before all away and that by the workinge and benefyte of the sea.

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The stuffe is gatherede by poore men women and Children inhabitants hereabouts. For the gatheringe we give a peny a Bushell men and women may and have gatherede between x and xii Busshells in a Tide and Children of 10 yers may gather iiij busshells a Tide wherby they find good Reliefe to ther Comforte and Contentmente.

Cf. w<sup>h</sup> ye Busshell Conteynethe in waighte 170<sup>li</sup>. w<sup>th</sup> the more c. wgt<sup>t</sup> yeldethe 10<sup>li</sup> clere brimstone refinede suche as we here p<sup>sent</sup> unto y<sup>r</sup> Hono<sup>rs</sup>.

The quantitie of Brimstone that may be made wicklie by the firnaces allreadie erected but not in full worke wilbe 2240 weight after this p<sup>porcon</sup>. The ffurnace is made to containe xx<sup>tie</sup> potts, ev<sup>rie</sup> one of seaven fote in Leynthe, ev<sup>rie</sup> pott conteynethe forty waight of Ewer and dischardgethe his weighte and yeldeth his Brymstone foure tymes betwene daie and nighte w<sup>ch</sup> is 16 weighte clere Brymstone a pece and in all is 320. So the same is by wicke 2240 w<sup>ch</sup> after one C and xij the C comethe unto 1971.

The vallue of Brymstone is sometimes more and sometimes lesse y<sup>t</sup> hathe of late bene at 30s the 100 and is nowe at xx<sup>s</sup>. Sometimes in a glutt y<sup>t</sup> may be at xvi<sup>s</sup> and at 14<sup>s</sup> but I doubte not but y<sup>t</sup> may be kepte at an Indifferente pryce between 60 the w<sup>ch</sup> is xx<sup>s</sup> after w<sup>ch</sup> rate the said quantytie of Brymstone will be wicklie worthe 19<sup>l</sup> 14<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup>.

## The chardges wherof wilbe as foloweth

The mr. worckman his wadges beinge 32 <sup>l</sup> a yere	
Comethe wicklie unto .....	00—13—04
To one that providethe y <sup>e</sup> stufe and keepeth y <sup>e</sup>	
acomptes 30 <sup>l</sup> a yere, wicklie .....	00—12—06
To one laborer after the rate of 6d. a daie .....	00—09—04
To Thre other laborers at 1 <sup>d</sup> a man by the day ..	00—01—01
Colles by wicke .....	0—04—00—00
Cf. men after the rate of 3200 weighte a daie beinge	
18 Bushells and by wick 126 bushells at ij <sup>d</sup> the	
Bushell amountethe unto .....	01—01—00
So the wicklie Chardges	
amounteth unto .....	vii <sup>li</sup> vij <sup>s</sup> ij <sup>d</sup>
Which beinge deducted out of the said some of	19 <sup>l</sup> 14 <sup>s</sup> 6 <sup>d</sup>
then remaynethe	11—1j—4d
Wherof deducte hir Ma <sup>te</sup> tenthe parte beinge	01—03—08—06
Then remaynethe clere gaine wicklie	10—13—07—06
Thus one furnace contynually daie and night	
in workinge clothe make by yere after the rate of	
112 the 100 Clere Brymstone	101492 <sup>li</sup> wgt <sup>ht</sup> .
The vallue wherof after the rate of 20 <sup>d</sup> the greate	
as before is .....	1014 <sup>l</sup> 18 <sup>s</sup> 00 <sup>d</sup>

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The chardge wherof by yere is .....	408 <sup>l</sup> 12 <sup>s</sup> 8 <sup>d</sup>
Hir Ma <sup>ty</sup> x <sup>th</sup> parte a mountethe unto .....	01 <sup>l</sup> 2 <sup>s</sup> 10 <sup>d</sup>
w <sup>ch</sup> two laste somes deductede out of the said	
1014 <sup>l</sup> 18 <sup>s</sup> ther remaynethe clere gayne ..	44 <sup>l</sup> 12 <sup>s</sup> 6 <sup>d</sup> ''

There is nothing to indicate who the writer of this report may have been or to whom it was addressed, but it seems reasonable to assume that the furnaces referred to were those established by Cornelius Stephenson.

Hasted's map of the Hundred of Whitstable shows six Copperas houses arranged in three groups extending along the Tankerton cliffs approximately from the Bowling Green in the "Castle" grounds to beyond the Beacon which, if the detail of the map is to be relied upon, stood somewhat east of the present flagstaff.

As will become apparent from the information derived from Mr. Bishop's collection of deeds, for many years each group was separately owned and operated and for convenience may be called after the names of the original owners, Menfield, Sympson, Mascall, while one house stood on part of a 28-acre site called "The Outlets."

The first man to manufacture copperas at Tankerton on a large scale seems to have been Thomas Menfield, a mayor of Faversham. How he came to occupy the land is explained in an Indenture dated 15th January, 1755, by which "Daniel Paulling and Ann his wife in consideration of £1,500 Assigned the Copperas House and Premises at Whitstable to Messrs William Mount, Thomas Page, John Mount and Thomas Page Jun<sup>r</sup>."

From this assignment we learn that on the 10th Jan. 1st James I, Henry Thompson of Hencham, co. Kent, gent. granted to Thomas Menfield,<sup>1</sup> one of the Jurats of Faversham, a thousand year lease of land called "the Four Acres," which at one time had belonged to John Aleyn of Tankerton at a yearly rent of 40s. and on this land Menfield built one copperas house. By his will dated 26th July, 1614,<sup>2</sup> among other bequests he left to his wife, Dorothie, "the Lease of my Coprize House in Whitstable and the Lease of the Goldstones w<sup>ch</sup> I hold from S<sup>r</sup> John Smith for and duringe the terme of the said Leases unexpired."

This Dorothy married, as her second husband, Sir Thomas Harflete, knt. of Ash-next-Sandwich and the Menfield property, held in trust by Sir Edward Master of Ospringe and John Wood of Faversham, was made over to the couple. By 1636 both were dead and the estate descended to Sir Thomas's son and heir, Sir Christopher Harflete, who

<sup>1</sup> Mendfield or Menfeilde.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in full in *Extracts from Wills and other Documents containing Benefactions to the Town of Faversham.* W. Ratcliffe, Faversham, 1844.

promptly sold the remainder of the lease and all his interest in the Copperas house for £1,000 to John Eldred, citizen and merchant of London. In the following February Eldred resold to William Aleyn, citizen and grocer, of London.

The Works remained in the possession of the Aleyn family for the next eighty-four years, then, in June, 1702, Sir Thomas Aleyn, grandson of William (his father Thomas had been created a baronet) parted with the remainder of the lease to a certain "Doctor of Physick," William Gibbons, of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, who received it in trust for another doctor, John Lawson, of St. Giles in the Fields, Middlesex, the latter having advanced the sum of £700 to Sir Thomas on the security of the property.

Despite the mortgage Sir Thomas continued to carry on the manufacture of copperas, his son Charles acting as his manager. Meanwhile a certain William Strengfellow of St. James' Westminster, clerk, had taken an assignment of Lawson's mortgage and Charles Aleyn "out of his own money's paid off and discharged £400, part of the said £700 Is. due to William Strengfellow and likewise paid several considerable sums for Repairs, Materials, etc. for the maintenance and the carrying on of the said Copperas House and Works and the Trade thereof".

Charles Aleyn's wife was named Mary and their daughter Ann, who upon her marriage became Ann Stirk. He must have died somewhere about the same time as his father, for by the direction of the latter's Will as recompense for his son's services and "because of the natural love and affection which he held for the said Ann Aleyn" the Whitstable property passed into the hands of a certain Thomas Page to be held in trust for the grand-daughter, her children and descendants subject to a sum of £300 10s. due to William Strengfellow. Page was further empowered to "raise, levy and pay unto William Mount and Fisher Mount all sums of money which they had advanced for maintaining, managing and carrying on the Copperas House and Works".

Thomas Page and William and Fisher Mount were partners in a prosperous stationer's business carried on at Tower Hill in the City of London. There is an amusing reference to a scion of the Mount family<sup>1</sup> in the *Memoirs of William Hickley, 1775 to 1782*.

In 1735 William Mount—Fisher Mount being then dead—took over the mortgage. Mary Aleyn died in 1742 and Ann Stirk in 1754 without issue. By her will she left to Ann Pauling, by the name of Ann Holloway, of Stanhope Street, near Clare Market in the Parish of St. Clement Danes, co. Middlesex, "her Estate at Whitstable whereon she had Copperas Beds & Copperas Banks."

Ann Pauling proved the Will and became entitled to the remainder of the 1,000 years lease and the premises. "AND WHEREAS the said

<sup>1</sup> See also *Arch. Cant.*, LXIX, 175.

William Mount with Fisher Mount and Thomas Page . . . were partners in trade and had the care and management of the said Copperas works and received the profits of the same for the benefit of Mary Aleyn and Ann Stirk and paid several sums for their support. And whereas the said Daniel Pauling by his marriage with the said Ann Holloway became entitled to the property, they, Daniel and Ann Pauling exhibited their Bill in the High Court of Chancery against the said Thomas Page for an amount of Rents and Profits of the said Copperas Works to which the said Thomas Page put in his answer."

About the same time William Mount commenced a Suit in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, as cousin and next-of-kin of the deceased Ann Stirk, to revoke the probate and set aside the Will.

With these two Suits pending and the uncertainty as to which way the matter might go, the partners Mount and Page offered the Paulings the sum of Fifteen Hundred Pounds for the absolute purchase of the property, and this was accepted.

For some forty years after this settlement the subsequent ownership of the property must go unrecorded owing to the absence of the relative documents. The explanation is as follows. On the 2nd December, 1788, Henry Peter Stacy, of the University of Oxford, gent., and Ann, his wife, assigned three undivided third parts or shares in a messuage (? Tankerton Farm) and the four acres of land to Charles Pearson, of Fleet Street, City of London, haberdasher, and in August of the following year the said Stacy signed a Deed of Covenant to produce the relative title deeds, the property "being only a small part of the Lands and Hereditaments of him the said Henry Peter Stacy".

While this explains the absence of deeds subsequent to the Mount and Page acquisition it does not clear up the mystery of the subsequent purchase. By an Assignment of the 24th October, 1791, Joseph Hurlock of Bedford Row, co. Middlesex, esq<sup>r</sup>. made over the property to Charles Pearson who "contracted for the absolute purchase of all the said premises and the remainder of the 1,000 years lease", for the sum of £650. Why Charles Pearson should have acquired the property will become obvious later.

It now becomes necessary to follow the history of another of the Tankerton works, the Sympson house.

In August, 1684, an Agreement was entered into between Susanna, widow of Nicholas Sympson, late of Milton, near Canterbury, and her two sons, Nicholas and Charles, both London merchants.

By this the mother granted to the sons the Rents, Issues and Profits of a Copperas House at Whitstable, and the third part of a lease of Copperas Stones "which the said Nicholas Sympson did hold with S<sup>r</sup> Thomas Allen and M<sup>r</sup> Jacob from the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury"

together with several pieces of land in Whitstable and Seasalter. In return the sons agreed to pay the mother an annual allowance of £95.

By the terms of Nicholas Sympson's will his three eldest sons (there were seven younger children) Nicholas, Charles and Edmund, after the death of their mother, were each to receive a third share of the Works.

In 1687 Susanna and her sons mortgaged for a term of years to Edward Waldoock, citezen and cooper of London "one full and equal third share" in their Copperas works and of and in the dwelling house then in the occupation of John Wells (possibly this may have been the nucleus of Tankerton Tower now known as "the Castle") together with the Copperas beds, cisterns, plant, etc., on a 500 years lease at a peppercorn rent for the sum of £410, and it was agreed that a sum of £480 should be repaid upon a specified date. This the Sympspons failed to do and the third share became the absolute property of Edward Waldoock. When he died some time later the third share passed to his wife Deborah, of St. Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey.

In 1695 Deborah bequeathed the third share to George Searle, her executor being a certain William Fashion. At the time of her death George Searle was still a minor and by the time he came of age William Fashion was dead also, so his son Lawrence Fashion, citizen and fishmonger, of London, as executor, duly transferred the property. In August, 1716, George Searle sold the third share to John Sympson of Merton College, Oxford, gentleman and Bachelor of Arts, who may have been a younger member of the Sympson family.

Edmund, the son of Nicholas senior, died soon after his mother and before 1690, leaving "no issue of his body", and in accordance with the custom of gavelkind his "third p<sup>t</sup> or share" in the Copperas work passed to his surviving brothers.

In December, 1690, the brother Nicholas sold his interest in the Copperas works together with certain lands in Whitstable and Seasalter to John Taylor, merchant of London.

John Taylor made a will dated 29th July, 1691, leaving to his eldest son Henry "one shilling and noe more and the reason why I give him noe more by this my Will is because of the settlement that is made upon the intermarriage between me and his Mother and the Issue of *her* two bodies and he is the onely Issue of us two". (The wording appears wrong but is as in the original.) To his "dear and much obliging Wife, Katherine" he left certain property in Seasalter and his share of the Copperas works "TO HAVE and TO HOLD the same unto the said Katherine and to the four children of our two bodies now begotten and to such of them as shall seem most expedient and best liking unto her".

In 1694, shortly after John Taylor's death, the widow purchased for £130 from Richard Sympson a one-twelfth share in the Copperas estate which had come to him on the death of his brother Edmund.

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Richard had a nephew, John. In 1723 this young man espoused Katherine Taylor's daughter, Mary, and by a Deed of Settlement a seven-twelfths share (being Richard Sympson's moyety and the one-twelfth share then belonging to Katherine Taylor) were placed in the hands of trustees for the benefit of the couple.

John Sympson made a will on the 15th February, 1738, leaving to his friend John Brome of Tuppenden, co. Kent, £100, to William Dilke of London, his attorney, £50, and the residue to his wife Mary with the proviso that if she failed to make any disposition all his freehold estates and "all my seven shares in twelve" in the Copperas house and works to Joseph Sympson, eldest son of William Sympson of Whitby, co. York, merchant, and failing him to any other of William's sons lawfully begotten.

Mary Sympson did, in fact, make the necessary disposition by Will in June, 1765, leaving her seven-twelfths share to Richard, a son of William Sympson of York and failing any of his issue to John Sympson of Cork, Ireland. She died in 1775, and in December, 1788, Richard, then described as of "Great Shelwood co. Surrey, Esquire", leased to Charles Pearson who, as has already been shown, a few years later acquired the Mendfield works, the seven-twelfths share in his messuage, garden, orchard, Copperas-house or works together with the plant, etc., at an annual rent of £25 with the option to purchase the property for the sum of £700 if the said Richard Sympson was able to obtain an undisputed title and so be in a position to sell. A schedule of the utensils or goods attached to the works named: One Boiler, old and worn out, partly cut up. Five coolers in working condition, one wooden fresh-water cistern lined with lead, two iron pots for the plumbers, two leaden pumps, one Scale or Beam for weighing copperas, etc., fourteen hundred iron weights, one iron poker, two iron rakes and two wheelbarrows.

In 1796 Richard Sympson departed this life having never married and the seven-twelfths share passed to John Sympson by the terms of Mary Sympson's will. As soon as he came into the property he proceeded to sell for £840 to Charles Pearson, now described as a "Copperas Manufacturer."

To revert to the five-twelfths share. Two of the Deeds applying to the Sympson works are unfortunately missing. Some eighteenth century attorney has carefully and boldly numbered the series in order and it is numbers 17 and 18 which are absent. Number 19 is a Release dated December, 1788, from Henry Peter Stacy of the University of Oxford, gentleman, a devise named in the Will of Samuel White of Enfield, co. Middlesex, Esquire deceased and Stacy's wife, Ann, to Charles Pearson. This recites that for the sum of £600 the Stacys sold to Charles Pearson "five undivided twelve parts" in the Sympson

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Copperas works. How Samuel White came to possess this five-twelfths share would no doubt have been explained by the missing deeds.

Adjacent to the Menfield and Sympson copperas works was a third known as the "Mascall houses." In the latter half of the seventeenth century Robert Mascall described as of the Lordship of Finsbury, co. Middlesex Esq<sup>r</sup> owned two copperas houses at Tankerton, known respectively as "the Old Copperas house" and "the New Copperas house."

The Old Copperas house stood on "a small parcell of land lying and being at a certain place called Tankerton in the parish of Whitstable", which had been left by Thomas Gold to his daughter Jane, Thomas Mascall's wife. It comprised three-quarters of an acre and five perches.

The following description of the buildings and equipment is repeated throughout the Mascall series of deeds.

"The Old Copperas house . . . being the first Copperas house which he the said Thomas Mascall made or built and being the lesser (is) separated from the New Copperas house by a particon of Timber and Deale Boards (both the said Copperas houses being under one roof) the said Old Copperas house containing in it One Furnace of Leade being Twelve foot and Two inches Square or thereabouts, Two Coolers of Leade each of them being nine and Twentye foot in length and Six foot and Six inches in breadth. One Cisterne being fifteen foot in length more or less and about Six foot in breadth being severed and parted from the Cisterne which did then belong to the New Copperas house by a particon of Clay or a Clay wall. Also one Binn over the said first menconed Cisterne of the same length and breadth. The Cisterne and Binn both made of Timber and Deale boards. And also without and near adjoining to the said Copperas house within the said small Parcell of Land Three Bedds or Pannells made of Gold Stones, Sulpher Stones, Marquesette Copperas Stones or Stones whereof Copperas is made, each Bedd being Seaven Roods in length and One Rodd and an halfe in breadth, being separated from four other Bedds belonging to the aforesaid New Copperas house by a Clay wall Cap<sup>d</sup> or headed with Brick. And also one other Cisterne without the said house being Eightie foot in length and nine foot and four inches in breadth being separated from a Cisterne belonging to the aforesaid New Copperas house by a particon of Clay or a Clay wall. And also one other Cisterne containeyng by estimacon Sixtye foot in length and Nine foot in breadth lyeing neare the said Cisterne hereinbefore menconed to conteyne Eightye foot in length and Nine foot Four inches in breadth. And also one Cole Yard as it is now severed and parted from the other Coleyard now belonging to the New Copperas house by a particon of Timber and

Deale boards. And also one Pump of Leade and a Small Furnace or Kettle for melting of Leade."

By an Indenture dated 7th November, 1683, Robert Mascall provided for the payment of a yearly sum of £100 to his son John and the latter's wife Elizabeth, as a charge on the Old Copperas house. In September, 1688, this sum was increased to £150 "of Lawful money of England or the value thereof IN COPPERAS to be delivered at Greenland Wharfe in St Saviors Dock in or near Southwarke at the Current and Market price for the time being". This increased payment was to be met out of the profits of both houses and contingent upon this amounting to £400 per annum. If this trading sum was not realized the amount by which it fell short was to be deducted from the £150. At the same time Robert Mascall provided for a marriage portion for his daughter, Mary, who was engaged to marry a London "Doctor of Physick," George Barclay, a marriage which in fact took place about 1691.

Not long after this event Robert Mascall died in debt and the Copperas works were placed in the hands of trustees to be "sold for debt and other things". The creditors were William Benson of London, merchant, Richard Hoar, of the City of London, goldsmith, John Suaten of Brittaines co. Essex, esq<sup>r</sup>, Anthony Taylor of Issleworth co. Middlesex, Joseph Allen of Whitstable, copperas boyler, Dame Ann Finch of Altham co. Kent, Isabella Woodford of Finsbury co. Middlesex, widow, and John Woodcock of Whitstable, blacksmith. The property was now described as "All that small part or parcell of land lying at the cliffe at or near a certain place called Tankerton in the parish of Whitstable co. Kent, containing by estimation twenty-two perches and one other parcel of land in Tankerton aforesaid containing an acre and a half and twenty perchess bordering upon the land of Mary Godfrey, widow towards the east, to lands now or late of Sir Thomas Allen towards the west and towards and bordering upon a certain lane there called Bolders Lane and towards the Sea north".

The trustees were unable to find a purchaser willing to give a sufficient sum to pay off the debt, so George Barclay and his wife, who were due £1,000 on the annuity provided for the latter's marriage portion, took over the premises and became possessed of the full title.

In spite of this settlement it appears that Robert Mascall's son, John, still claimed a fourth share of the works. He had a son, also named John, who in 1714 married Sarah, daughter and only child of Sarah Hall. This lady was sister to one Samuel Wise.

In 1730 John Mascall (the grandson) was declared a bankrupt and two of his creditors, William Watson and William Baker, became assignees of his estate.

Samuel Wise died in September, 1732, without making a will but possessed of considerable personal estate to which his three brothers,

together with Sarah Mascall in the right of her mother Sarah Hall, each became entitled to a fourth part. Watson and Baker contended that the one-fourth share of Sarah "so came to her husband John Mascall and was due to them in settlement of his debts". The matter was referred to the Master of the Rolls who ruled that out of the one-fourth share the outstanding debts should be paid off. Money available, apart from the Whitstable property, was to be invested in Government security and the interest from time to time used to pay off the Mascall creditors. How long this took is not disclosed, but by 1740 the bankrupt John was in business again as a haberdasher. By this date, too, his wife Sarah was dead, and somewhat later he remarried, the second wife's name being Elizabeth.

When the debts had been liquidated Watson and Baker released the Copperas property to Peter Wise (Sarah Mascall's uncle) and Josiah Keene of London, corn-factor, to hold for the benefit of Sarah who was to receive the profits. If at her death she had failed to make any appointment the profits were to go to her husband. She did in fact fail to make any appointment and died without issue, so John Mascall inherited.

He must have been a poor man of business, for he was again short of money and proceeded to raise funds by way of mortgage to the tune of £200 from Thomas Crozier of St. Mary Hill, London, drysalter. In this state matters rested until 1747 when Mascall agreed to sell his interest in the works to a Mr. Nicholas Eaton, Citizen and Fishmonger of London for a sum sufficient to pay off the Crozier mortgage and to provide yearly annuities of £40 to himself and £20 to his wife Elizabeth to be paid by Nicholas Eaton.

The story is continued by a deed dated 30th August, 1770. Nicholas Eaton was now dead and the property had passed under his will to his cousin Peter Eaton. The latter had also departed this life and his estate was administered by his executrix who was his cousin, Hannah Markland, of Woodford co. Essex, spinster.

A "Release," dated 1770 between Hannah Markland and John Stiegler of Dowgate Hill, London, cooper, provided that the latter should purchase the three-quarters of an acre and five perches of land with the buildings, etc., for the sum of £576 13s. 6d. There are now significant differences in the description of the boundaries. This reads ". . . lying towards and bordering upon the lands heretofore of Mary Godfrey, widow but now of the said John Stiegler towards the East, and bordering upon the lands formerly of Sir Thomas Allen but now of Joseph Hurlock Esquire towards the West, towards a Copperas house formerly of Robert Mascall but now of Sarah Parker, widow towards the North, towards the lands formerly of Mr. Sympson but now of (blank) Sympson, widow and Samuel White towards the South."

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On the 14th December, 1770, Hannah Markland executed another Release of property at Whitstable which had belonged to Peter Eaton. In this case she sold to William Heathfield of the parish of St. Mary, Bethnal Green for £491 12s. 6d. "All THAT undivided moyety or half part . . . in all that Copperas House and land thereunto belonging in the tenure or occupation of Mary Eaton . . . and also in the undivided moyety of the messuage and three parcels of land containing by estimation 12 acres, lying near the said Copperas house formerly in the occupation of Edward Parker, yeoman, now Thomas Andrews."

This introduces the fourth parcel of land associated with the Copperas industry, in all some 28 acres which originally or later became known as "the Outlets," comprising the low-lying area between Tankerton Hill and the mouth of the Gorrel stream which, in the early nineteenth century, was enlarged and converted into the Harbour. In the writer's youth this area used to be referred to by the older inhabitants of Whitstable as "the Copperas putches".

In the latter part of the seventeenth century this land had belonged to Robert Knight of Lowestoft and he may have built the Copperas house which arose thereon, but this is uncertain as the earliest deed (2nd May, 1693) is silent on the matter. At that date the works were administered by Robert Knight, Sir Thomas Allen of Totteridge co. Middlesex bart., William Eaton of Dover, merchant, and Thomas Oliver of Whitstable, mariner.

At Robert Knight's death, which occurred some time before 1693, the property passed to his wife, Mary, to be sold at the discretion of his Exors. It was in fact sold in May, 1693, to Thomas Marriott of Lincoln's Inn esq., Gilbert Ware Citizen and Weaver of London and John Willmer of London, silkman, the purchase price being one hundred pounds for three full fourth parts of 28 acres of arable land together with the Copperas works.

In August, 1713, John Wilmer and Mary, his wife, Thomas Marriott and Gilbert Ware conveyed the property to John Godfrey of the Middle Temple London, esquire for the sum of One Hundred and Forty Three Pounds.

In March of the following year John Godfrey conveyed to Brooke Bridges of the parish of St. Andrew's Holborn, co. Midd<sup>x</sup> for "three score and Seventeen pounds" the twenty acres of arable and pasture, together with the moyety or half part of the Copperas works.

In June, 1716, Mary Eaton, widow of William Eaton and eight members of the Eaton family conveyed to Thomas Lupton of the Middle Temple London, gent. various properties in Dover and Canterbury and also "all that moyety or half part of the Cop<sup>s</sup> house & land there unto belonging (at Tankerton) with the furnaces, coolers, cisterns

and all things belonging thereto in the occupation of sd. Mary Eaton. And also the moyety or half part in that Messuage". (Particulars extracted from a "Lease for a year," 6th June, 1716. Fuller particulars would have been contained in the Release dated the following day, but the deed is missing and no doubt passed with the other property at Dover and Canterbury.)

The next deed of the series is a Release of 2nd August, 1759, when the Hon. Charles Pinfold (Governor of Barbados), son and heir of Charles Pinfold of Doctors Commons, Doctor of Law, who was surviving trustee named in the will of John Godfrey conveyed to Chamberlain Godfrey of Sergeant's Inn, esq<sup>r</sup> second son and only surviving devise "all that 28 acres" formerly in the possession of Knight, Eaton, Alleyne [Allen] and Oliver.

It is difficult to follow the legal story of ownership during the following ten years because of the previously mentioned absence of some of the Menfield Works deeds and the reintroduction to the story of the "Four acres" upon which they stood. In 1769 Joseph Pinfold of *Sergeant's Inn* and Charles Woodcock of *Brentford Butts co. Middlesex* agreed to sell for £900 (each to receive £450) to John Steigler "ALL Those individed moieties" in "The Copperas worke," the messuage adjoining and "the Outlets" formerly containing sixteen acres and also the piece of ground called "the Four acres" lying southward from the Copperas works.

It will be noted that the acreage of the Outlets is here given as "formerly" sixteen. This is explained by the qualifying wording ". . . some part thereof hath lately been taken in by the Commissioners of Sewers for the purpose of making Sea Banks".

Considerations of space, for a paper which perhaps already has become inordinately long, precludes following the ramifications of the successive ownership of several minority interests arising from the operation of the Kentish law of Gavelkind and the fractional shares created thereby. The story is best concluded by introducing a certain Elizabeth Radford of the parish of St. Dunstan in the West and later of Ludgate Hill, City of London, spinster.

In December, 1777, this lady purchased for the sum of £1,200 from Sarah Parker, of the parish of St. George in the East, co. Middlesex, widow, aunt and heir at law of Charles Crisp Rice who was son and heir of John Rice of St. Paul Deptford, co. Kent, merchant, the "Acre and a Half and twenty perches" and the "small piece or parcel of land lying at the Cliffe" upon which stood the two Mascall houses.

Why a (presumably) young and unmarried woman should have any interest in the manufacture of copperas is explained by the fact that she was the niece of John Stiegler from whom, in 1773, she had inherited the Manor of Tankerton. In April, 1780, she espoused Charles Pearson,

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of Ravensbourne House, Greenwich, who was the sixth son of Thomas Pearson of Moulton Park, Northamptonshire. On the 19th of that month a voluminous Marriage Settlement Deed was signed by the happy pair, conveying to three trustees the young lady's Copperas property, but the terms of the settlement hardly concern this story. How, later, Charles Pearson acquired and added the other works to the Mascall houses has already been traced. In this way all the Tankerton Copperas houses came under one ownership but too late to be operated successfully. By the early years of the nineteenth century Copperas was being produced more economically and efficiently elsewhere, and through this competition the Whitstable trade died a natural death.<sup>1</sup>

Looking back over the successive ownership of the several properties it is a significant fact that most of the proprietors of the houses were absentee owners, relying upon a manager or foreman to run the business and obviously having little if any real knowledge or connection with the business other than as an investment. In this respect two Indentures not yet mentioned are concerned not with the ownership of the property but with the manufacture and supply of the copperas.

In one, dated 28th March, 1775, Sarah Parker, who has already figured in this account, agreed to sell and deliver to Joseph Hurlock of London, esq<sup>r</sup>, Joseph Hagen of London, merchant, Ephraim Rinhold Seehl of Blackwall co. Midd<sup>x</sup> gent, John Tucker of Weymouth co. Dorset and John Twyman of London, esq<sup>r</sup>, co-partners in the business of buying and selling copperas, all the copperas made at her "Copperas work" at Whitstable for a term of seven years commencing 1st January, 1775, at the price of 4s. 6d. per hundredweight, not more than 120 tons of the best Green copperas to be made in any one year. The copperas to be delivered in casks containing not less than nine and not more than fourteen hundredweight at some wharfplace or warehouse between Deptford Creek and London Bridge and to put the same into such lighters or carriages as the co-partners might direct. She further agreed

<sup>1</sup> Since writing this account Mr. Brian E. Porter of Seasalter has sent me some particulars concerning his forebear Thomas Porter who was born at Canterbury in 1762. Early in the nineteenth century it would appear this Thomas came to Whitstable as manager of the Copperas Works. He is reputed to have been the only man in the district who could burn (i.e. fuse) lead, a necessary procedure in the making of the copperas trays. Occasionally he went to Essex to do this at Charles Pearson's works there. In April 1802 Pearson had purchased from Mrs. Sarah Seehl, of Limehouse co. Middlesex, widow and Mr. John Perry, of Blackwall co. Middlesex, Esquire, the lordship of the Manor of Walton within the Soken, co. Essex, where he was already in occupation of a Copperas Works. As late as 1828 Thomas Porter's address was still given as "the Copperas Works."

A *Pilot's Guide to the Thames* of 1828, corrected to 1836, shows two of the houses presumably because they were good landmarks, while they are similarly marked on one of the charts illustrating *A Handbook for the Navigation of the Thames and Medway* published by R. H. Laurie in 1867 in the writer's possession. It may be, however, that this chart was originally prepared for some earlier publication and the houses at this later date were not still in existence.

not to sell copperas to anyone else and that if more than 120 tons should be made in any one year the balance would not be taken by the co-partners but should go towards the delivery for the following year. It was also agreed that a "Secretary, Agent, or other person should make periodic inspection of the Work at Whitstable to see that the above clause was being faithfully carried out". It was further agreed "that if the Copperas, from time to time, made by the said Sarah Parker, . . . shall be yellow or damaged or shall not be of the quality which the best Green Copperas ought to be when it comes to the wharfplace or warehouse . . . an abatement shall be made in the price thereof."

In view of the particulars contained in the other Indenture it seems highly probable that the "Secretary, Agent or other person" appointed under this agreement was in fact one of the co-partners, Ephraim Rinhold Seehl. By the earlier Indenture Seehl had agreed to sell to his fellow partners all the copperas made at the Whitstable Works called "The Joint House" for a period of seven years, amounting to 100 tons in each year at 4s. 6d. per hundredweight. The Indenture concludes by stating that the other co-partners had appointed Seehl on the 16th February, 1775, to be their Secretary for a period of seven years, that if he was discharged three months notice should be given and that in such event the contract to purchase copperas from his works should cease.

Some time during the period when Sarah Parker held the property a Survey was made and recorded as follows:

"A SURVEY of an Estate belonging to M<sup>rs</sup> Sarah Parker, situate on Tankertown [*sic*] hill in the Parish of Whitstable in the County of Kent. Viz.

Freehold land, and a good dwelling house thereon; a large Copperas bed enclosed with a Wall; an extensive Copperas house, Storehouses, Coal warehouse, Stable etc. compleat for the business and in good repair: Likewise two long cisterns with heads, drains etc to the same; a large lead boiler with good ironwork and brickwork to the same and Stoke-hole; a large lubber place with four lead pans, lead bearers and flashings; two large pipes and bosses; two large leaden heads, troughs and woodwork to all the same; Five large and thick leaden Coolers, with lead platforms and flashings, leaden heads and long lead troughs, all with brickwork, kurbs, woodcasings and troughs to the same; two Cisterns lined with lead, with woodwork, carriage, pipes, cocks etc to the same; A large leaden pump and long leaden trough with woodwork and ironwork to the same; three iron pots set in brickwork with ironwork and doors to the same, covered with lead at the Top.

NOTE, Thick leaden gutters to all the said buildings, and round the

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said premises are a great quantity of Oak posts, railing and spurs and some gates etc.

By the Sea-side, Eight large Jettes and five small ditto, with long Wharfing and a great quantity of Stones fitted in, with land-ties and ironwork to all the same. Long land-piles, land-ties and planking to keep the upper ground secure; the whole having been done within these few years at a great expence.

ALL THE AFORESAID as described, and all other things fixed and fastened to the said premises are valued at the Sum of Two thousand.

The Stock in Trade and all Utensils and Moveables, which M<sup>rs</sup> Parker paid for by Inventory, are to be appraised and paid for extra

NOTE. The Dwelling house and Land are not in the above valuation but are given in to the Purchaser to support the said premises."

Throughout this long legal story there is nothing to mirror the life led by generations of Whitstable men, and possibly women and children also, who by their toil and sweat produced the copperas for their absentee employers. Only when some untoward incident occurred to interest local news readers of the day is the veil of oblivion lifted, as for example when *The Kentish Gazette* on 8th February, 1788, reported: "Friday evening as John Wallard, one of the men who work at the copperas houses at Whitstable, was assisting in running the copperas into coolers, he unfortunately slipped in up to his breast. Every assistance was given but in twenty-four hours a mortification ensued and two hours after he died."

We know nothing of the number of hands employed in the various houses, what hours they worked, the amount of their pay, whether the employment affected their health and how dangerous it was or those other details it is the aim of the historian to record. One day perchance some unforgotten diary or eyewitness's account may come to light to help complete the picture of this forgotten industry.

One discovery of recent years at least has been made. In 1947 men working in the public Pleasance between the "Castle" grounds and the beach came upon one of the copperas pannells. The Whitstable Historical Society erected a notice-board and show-case to mark the spot and to exhibit specimens which were selected by Professor H. H. Read, F.R.S. and a Whitstable native, to illustrate the copperas industry. In such a manner can local Societies well exercise one of their most important functions.