

Chapter 12

Distaff kin of Benjamin (1742-1806)

SOME RELATED CONTEMPORARIES OF BENJAMIN PLANT OF SHEFFIELD MOOR¹

May 1996. One of a series of Chapters by Dr. John S. Plant, Keele University, England, ST5 5BG.

This Chapter relates to a bellows maker Benjamin Plant (i.e. ‘*Ben(bellows)*’) and, for example, his connections with a well-documented Ward family. Fuller accounts of this Ward family have been given by others — these make it clear that *Ben(bellows)*'s wife, Hannah, was the only sister of Joseph Ward who became the Master Cutler in 1790; two of Joseph Ward's sons, in particular, appear prominently in early nineteenth century Sheffield history. This and the subsequent Chapter add information about *Ben(bellows)* giving some insights into his role beyond the information which is provided in a standard book on Sheffield's history.

12.1 The bellows maker Benjamin Plant

The bellows maker Benjamin Plant (i.e. ‘*Ben(bellows)*’) of Chapter 11) is listed in a 1774 Directory² as having an address at Coal-pit Lane which was on the SW edge of Sheffield town — this address was near the site of the present Town Hall which is now near the centre of a vastly expanded Sheffield. In 1793 rate books, his various listed properties still include 17 houses and shops in Coal-pit Lane (Chapter 11) though he apparently moved his main base around 1793 to the vicinity of the Little Sheffield site of Plant's Yard (Chapter 10). Little Sheffield, though now regarded as near central Sheffield, had until those times been a separate hamlet about a mile to the south west of Sheffield town.

Though baptised in 1742 at Duckmanton, 10 miles to the south, *Ben(bellows)* appears in Sheffield parish church records by 1766. This is earlier than his presumed brother, the bricklayer John, who was still by around 1770 having his children baptised at Rotherham, 6 miles to the north east of Sheffield, prior to his appearance in Little Sheffield in a 1787 Trades Directory entry.

The burial (8 Jan 1806) of *Ben(bellows)* is recorded at the parish church of Sheffield (later the Cathedral) where, according to his will, he owned ‘*five sittings*’ though no memorial inscription has been found. *Ben(bellows)*'s will, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 13, makes it clear that he was from the Duckmanton Plant family (as indicated in Figure 12.1) and it also mentions a nephew of his wife, the 1798 Master Cutler Samuel Broomhead Ward (Figure 12.2), whom *Ben(bellows)* describes as ‘*my friend*’.

12.1.1 Benjamin's marriage and daughters

It seems that *Ben(bellows)* moved from Duckmanton to Sheffield, for reasons that are not yet clear though *perhaps* to live near an uncle (Chapter 11) and to take up his place in Sheffield's emerging industry. By 1766 he married into an important Sheffield family. *Ben(bellows)* thus became

¹Including data supplied by Pat Clark of the Local Studies Centre, Sheffield City Libraries and Sue Graves of the Mappin Art Gallery. A version of this Chapter has appeared as J.S.Plant (August 1996) *Roots and Branches* **12**, 19-32.

²Sketchley's Sheffield Directory (1774).

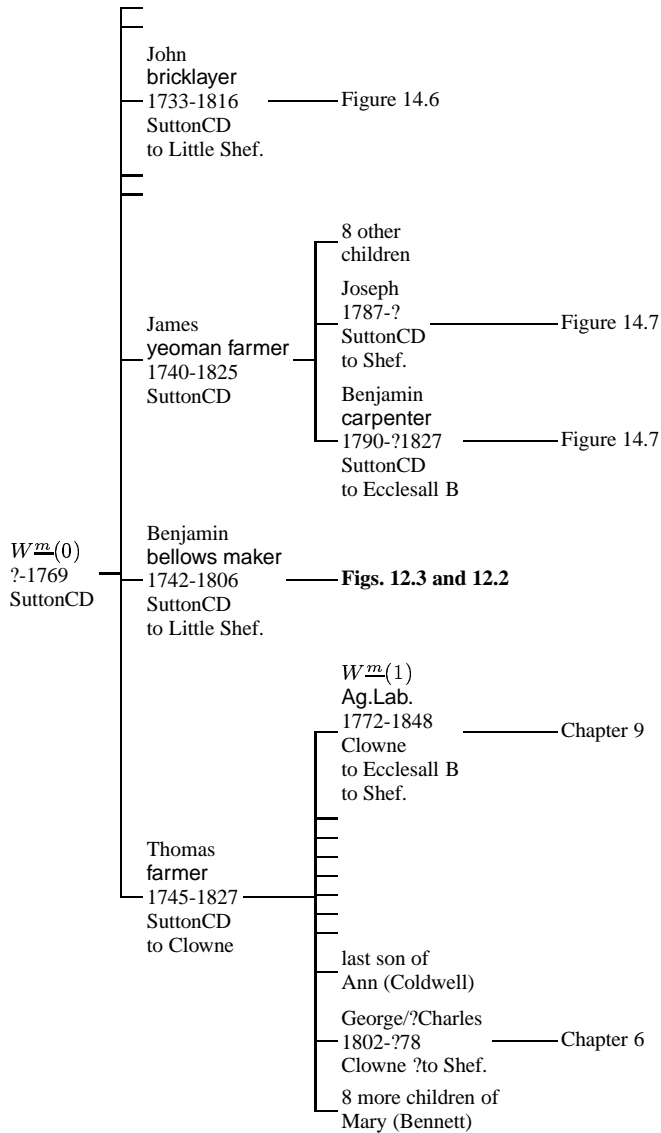


Figure 12.1: Some spear kin of Benjamin Plant (1742-1806)

the brother-in-law of Joseph Ward who was to become the 1790 Master Cutler, as is made clear in the recorded history of the Ward family of Sheffield (e.g. *Peeps into the Past: being Passages from the Diary of Thomas Asline Ward*³). A more complete pedigree than that in Figure 12.2, for this Broomhead-Ward-Asline family, has been given by Joseph Hunter⁴.

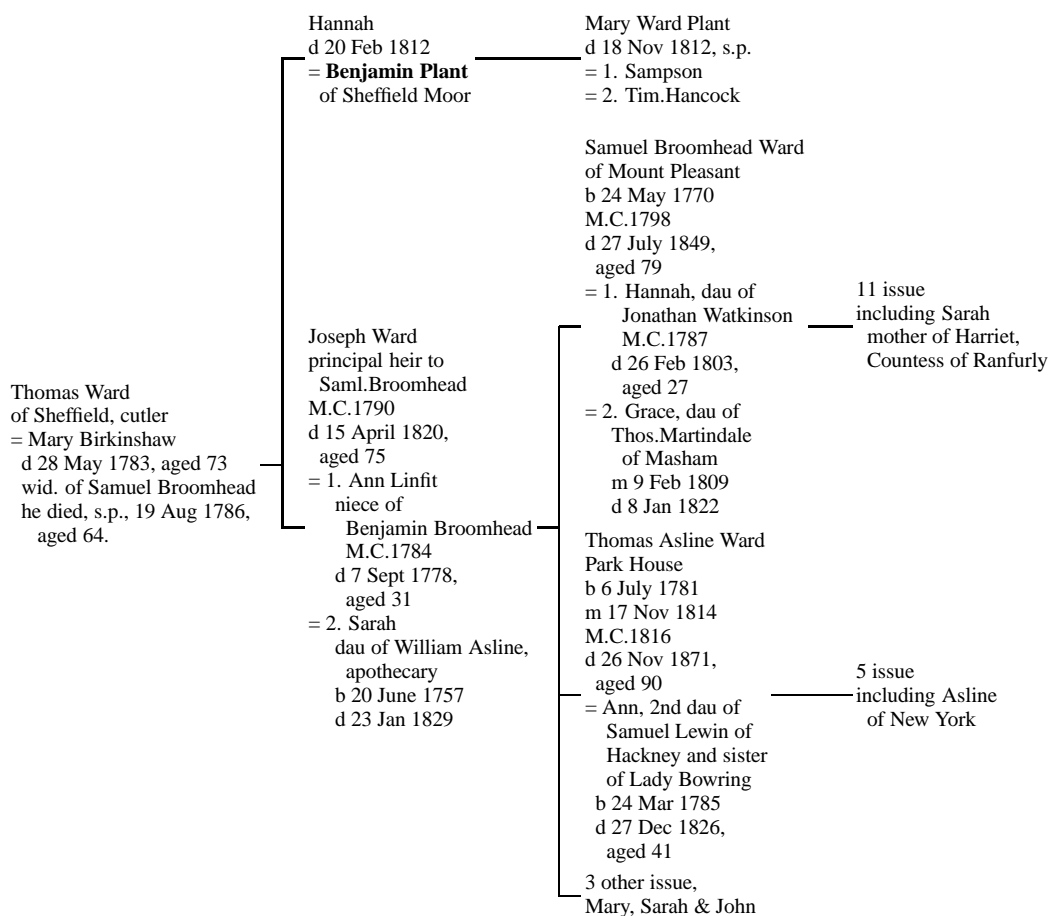
At the 1766 marriage (banns) in Sheffield of ‘batchellor’ Benjamin Plant (otp⁵) and spinster Hannah Ward (otp) both signed the register as did the four witnesses John Broadbent, Thos. (W/H)(a/u)ll, John Scott and Mary Bayliff though the first two of these were also witnesses at other marriages and were probably hired officials.

Ben(bellows)’s bride, Hannah, and her brother Joseph were the children of Thomas Ward (admitted to the Company of Cutlers 28 May 1726) and Mary Birkinshaw, who was the wife of the childless Sheffield cutler Samuel Broomhead (admitted 29 Jan 1742). Samuel Broomhead was thus Hannah and Joseph’s step-father and he was also an uncle of this Joseph Ward’s first wife, Ann

³This book, which relates to the diary of Benjamin Plant’s nephew T.A.Ward, was edited by Alexander B Bell with an introduction and annotations by Robert Eadon Leader; it was published by Sir W.C.Leng & Co., Ltd., in 1909.

⁴Joseph Hunter, *Familiae Minorum Gentium*, Ed John W Clay, London (1894-6), Harleian Society’s Publications.

⁵This is an abbreviation of ‘of this parish’.

Figure 12.2: Some distaff kin of Benjamin Plant (from *Peeps into the Past*)

Linfit. Samuel Broomhead and his principal heir Joseph Ward lived near The Ponds at the SE edge of Sheffield town, as will feature again later (Chapter 13).

In the Sheffield baptism records for *two* daughters in 1768 and 1772 (Figure 12.3) there is confirmation that their father Benjamin Plant was a **bellows maker** and hence, no doubt, the *Ben(bellows)* who is found in Coalpit Lane, at least by 1774, and later at the (future) site of Plant's Yard in Little Sheffield. The diary of *Ben(bellows)'s* nephew, T.A.Ward, mentions only one daughter (e.g. Figure 12.2), suggesting that a younger daughter Fanny Plant (bap 1772) may have died young, and Joseph Hunter⁶ also lists Mary Ward Plant (bap 1768) as *Ben(bellows)'s* only child.

In *Ben(bellows)'s* 1805 will, Mary Ward Plant's husband is indicated to be '*Timothy Hancock of Sheffield cutler*', whom she had married in 1802⁷. It seems clear that the Plants considered that the Ward connection was an important one and *Ben(bellows)'s* 1805 will refers to his daughter as *Mary Ward Hancock*, even though double barrelled names were rare at that time⁸.

⁶Joseph Hunter, *Fam. Min. Gent.*, *ibid.*

⁷This Timothy Hancock apparently descended from a line of Timothy Hancocks reaching back to his grandfather Timothy, who was baptised (21.4.1725 at Sheffield) to a Daniel Hancock. He was hence *not* closely related to the famous 1763 Master Cutler, Joseph Hancock (1711-91), who is widely known as the 'Father of Sheffield Plate'.

⁸Double Christian names were rare until midway through the eighteenth century and, for example, Samuel Broomhead Ward was only the second double barrelled Master Cutler in 1798, though double barrelled names preponderated for Master Cutlers after 1870.

Benjamin (1742-1806)	Mary
bellows maker	bap 30.3.1768 SHEFFIELD
d 3.1.1806	dsp 18.11.1812
bur 8.1.1806 SHEFFIELD	m(1) 21.7.1788 SHEFFIELD
m 16.12.1766 SHEFFIELD	Samuel Sampson
Hannah Ward	m(2) 16.6.1802 SHEFFIELD
d 20.2.1812	Timothy Hancock
	Fanny
	bap 11.9.1772 SHEFFIELD

Figure 12.3: Some Sheffield Plant parish records

12.1.2 Some apparent associations with Master Cutlers

The 1741 Master Cutler, Richard Kent, was on the Company of Cutlers from 1730 to 1750 and he was Master again, following the death of his successor Thomas Rose, from April to August in 1743. This Richard Kent resided in Coal Pit Lane⁹.

It is interesting to note that these surnames reappear in a deed for Benjamin Plant's Coalpit Lane property, where *William Kent* and *William Rose* are listed in 1824 as former occupants (Chapter 14). The Kent family was apparently based mainly in Rotherham, 6 miles to the north east, but some further evidence will be presented in Chapter 14 to support the supposition that some of the Kents had an association with *Ben(bellows)'s* Coalpit Lane property. As the name Kent was generally rare in the area, apart from at Rotherham, *Ben(bellows)'s* Coalpit Lane property may hence be considered to be a likely location for the *Rich Kent* and then the '*Late Kents*' entries, which appear in Ecclesall property records for 1729-74. These Kent property entries are listed in connection with *Broom-hall Land* and *Ben(bellows)* was also associated with *Broom-hall Land* giving, seemingly, another connection between Richard Kent and *Ben(bellows)*.

One might wonder if *Ben(bellows)'s* father, William Plant of Duckmanton, was at some stage associated with this property, perhaps between the times of Richard Kent (around 1730-50) and this *W^m(0)'s* burial, which was apparently in 1769 at Duckmanton. *Ben(bellows)* may have lived in Coal-pit Lane from around the times of his 1766 marriage and, certainly, a 1774 Directory lists him there. The change in rate-book entries from '*Late Kents*' in 1774 to '*Late Plant yard*' by 1779 has been mentioned already (Chapter 11) and the available evidence seems conducive to a suggestion that '*Late Kents*' and '*Late Plant yard*' may have been the same location, namely *Ben(bellows)'s* Coalpit Lane property.

It was around Richard Kent's year of office that Thomas Boulsover first discovered the basic process of forming Sheffield Plate and Benjamin Huntsman invented Crucible Steel. It was also 1741 when Francis Sitwell died, bequeathing \$400 to be loaned in amounts of up to \$5 to impoverished cutlers for up to six months, interest free, on a deposit of goods to be kept in the Cutlers Company's store house. This Francis Sitwell's nephew built the substantial property Mount Pleasant in 1777 and this was bought in 1794 by *Ben(bellows)'s* nephew S.B.Ward.

Joseph Ibberson was Master Cutler in 1759 in which year the Company of Cutlers first engaged in co-operative steel making. The management of the Company's new steel furnace in Scotland Street was left in the hands of Joseph Ibberson from 'first heat' in November 1759 to the beginning of 1762¹⁰. In 1772, after several unsuccessful business years, this co-operative steel making venture was abandoned¹¹.

⁹*History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire in the County of York*, Vol.1, by Robert Eadon Leader, 1905.

¹⁰The profits for these $3\frac{3}{4}$ years were \$212 6s 11d. A son of the curate in charge of St Paul's was apprenticed to Joseph Ibberson in 1760 and, like any labourer's boy, he took his chances working for his keep and 16d a year, not even apparel being found (*History of the Company of Cutlers*, *ibid*, Vol I, page 49).

¹¹There is some evidence that the inventor of crucible steel, Benjamin Huntsman, was approached by the Company in 1750 though the main thrust of steel-making at that time was still that of the blister steel from Cementation Furnaces, in

As will be detailed further in Chapter 13, a Joseph Ibberson (?-1826) was the rate-payer for the Spurr Wheel in 1793 and this wheel, which was in a rural area to the SW of Sheffield, later became known as the Ibbotson or Ibberson Wheel. *Ben(bellows)* owned land near the Spurr Wheel, at least by around 1790 and, moreover, he was the rate-payer for the Spurr Wheel in 1802. The name of the 1781 Master Cutler, Peter Spurr the older, might well be related to this Water Wheel, as is evidenced below.

The evidence for connecting the Spurr Wheel with Peter Spurr relates to an apparent association between Benjamin Plant, who is *known* to have been associated with the Spurr Wheel, and the Spurr family. This Peter Spurr's (MC 1781) sister was the wife of Thomas Tillotson (MC 1789) and the Tillotsons, like Benjamin Plant, were associated with Coal-pit Lane, Highfield and Broomhall. Moreover, this Thomas Tillotson was a fellow officer of *Ben(bellows)*'s brother-in-law, on the Company of Cutlers around 1790. Rather later, the Tillotsons appear repeatedly in the published diaries of *Ben(bellows)*'s nephew T.A.Ward (MC 1816) — George Tillotson (MC 1817), who was the brother of John Tillotson (MC 1810), subsequently bought Mount Pleasant at Highfield from *Ben(bellows)*'s friend and nephew, S.B.Ward (MC 1798). These family connections also seem to relate to the earlier discussed evidence (Chapter 11) of an association between *Ben(bellows)* and the Newbold family, who were tenants of the Broomhall Wheel near the Little Sheffield site of Plant's Yard. One of Thomas Newbold's (MC 1751) grand-daughters married Peter Spurr the younger (MC 1824) of Highfield, which was near this Plant's Yard site.

It hence seems likely that *Ben(bellows)* was closely acquainted with at least some of the above mentioned Master Cutlers as well as with those close relatives of his wife who became Master Cutlers themselves. Although the step-father Samuel Broomhead of *Ben(bellows)*'s wife was not himself Master, his brother Joseph was fined for refusing Mastership in 1771 and another brother, Benjamin Broomhead, was Master Cutler in 1784. Furthermore, *Ben(bellows)*'s brother-in-law Joseph Ward attained that position in 1790 followed by two of his sons, Samuel Broomhead Ward (MC 1798) and Thomas Asline Ward (MC 1816).

12.1.3 Benjamin Plant's wife's family

According to records of 1765 and 1774, *Ben(bellows)*'s wife's step-father, Samuel Broomhead of Pond Lane, was tenant of the Stalker Wheel which was about a mile or more to the south west of Pond Lane and near the (future) site of Plant's Yard at Little Sheffield. This Samuel Broomhead was subjected to threats as is revealed in the following anonymous letters¹²:

'You may Please yourself, But surely as Day and Night cometh you shall Repent your neglect if in 6 days you do not Lay 100 pounds 2 underground just at Back of 6 Mile Stone the road to Athersage. ...' (6 July 1780)

and again:

'... the reason of these 3 troublesome letters is you are able to Bear the loss ... Keep all secret nor tell your most secret friend nor watch for I shall be armed with 3 loaded pistols. ...' (18 July 1781).

This may have been an early example of the sentiments involved in 'rattening' whereby workers destroyed employers' machinery¹³.

The Stalker Wheel was immediately upstream on the Porter Brook from the Broomhall Wheel, which was in the tenancy of the Newbould family. Samuel Broomhead's place as tenant of the Stalker Wheel is taken, in 1793 rate-books and a 1794 list, by *Ben(bellows)*'s brother-in-law

which complete melting was not achieved and carbon was diffused instead into the iron from its surface in an inhomogeneous and less reliable manner. The main centre for blister steel was at Newcastle, some 130 miles to the north, though Sheffield subsequently supplanted it as the principal steel city.

¹²*Peeps into the Past*, *ibid*, page 250.

¹³The employers were generally called '*Little Mesters*' to distinguish them from the *Master Cutler* himself.

Joseph Ward who, as shown in Figure 12.2, was the principal heir to Samuel Broomhead¹⁴. In 1794 *Ben(bellows)* acquired land stated to be at the Broomhall Wheel and, as will be discussed in Chapter 13, an 1802 rate-book indicates that this land was probably between the Broomhall and Stalker Wheels.

A step-uncle of *Ben(bellows)*'s wife, Benjamin Broomhead (?-1796, MC 1784), lived in Fargate in Sheffield and had a warehouse in the adjoining Pepper Alley. This was about 0.1 mile to the east of *Ben(bellows)*'s Coalpit Lane home, on the southern edge of Sheffield town, and about a third of the way to Samuel Broomhead's home in Pond Lane. It is not clear whether the brothers Samuel, Benjamin and Joseph Broomhead were closely related to the 'John' and Benjamin Broomhead who held the Upper Lescar Wheel, which was upstream on the Porter Brook from Little Sheffield towards the Spurr Wheel. A 1777 Broomhead tenancy of the Upper Lescar Wheel is confirmed by records of 1787 and 1794¹⁵. There are references to the *close* Broomhead relatives of *Ben(bellows)*'s wife in the published diary of *Ben(bellows)*'s nephew T.A.Ward.

12.2 Some contemporary related History

Ben(bellows), who had bases near the head and foot of Sheffield Moor, became known as *Benjamin Plant of Sheffield Moor*. His connection with Coalpit Lane near the Moor head may have dated from around the 1760s, by when his wife's step-father held the tenancy of the Stalker Wheel near the Moor foot. *Ben(bellows)* apparently did not move his main base down the Moor to Little Sheffield, however, until around 1790. *Ben(bellows)*'s and his wife's family's connections with the 1779-88 Ecclesall Enclosure Act have been described already in Chapter 11 and this led on to Sheffield's first major expansion of the Industrial Age, which was on Sheffield Moor.

Some further events in Sheffield's history can be associated with the bellows-maker Benjamin Plant, as outlined below. This Benjamin Plant (1742-1806) appears to have been close to his wife's nephew, Samuel Broomhead Ward (1770-1849), for example who is mentioned in particular below.

12.2.1 Early invention

The earliest two references to improvements on traditional manufacturing methods, in the records of the Company of Cutlers¹⁶, mention Elkana Roberts and J.Fletcher. These same names are associated, in deeds (e.g. Chapter 11), with *Ben(bellows)*'s Coal-pit Lane property.

1704-5 *Fines & americiam^{ts} & money given by persons y^t invented new sorts, viz. Rob^t Longson, Elkana Roberts, & James Hool* \$3.16.0

1707-8 *Of J Fletcher his new invented sort* 10.0

These apparent 'fines' are not as pernicious to innovation as might at first appear, as a 1712 parchment makes it clear that they were a sort of patent fee, paid in acknowledgement of protection against piracy.

12.2.2 The 'thirteen to a dozen' controversy

The first wife of *Ben(bellows)*'s young friend and nephew, Samuel Broomhead Ward, was a daughter (d 26.2.1803) of the 1787 Master Cutler, Jonathan Watkinson, who acquired an unenviable notoriety that was long remembered in Joseph Mather's popular Music Hall song '*Watkinson and his Thirteens*'. It had been a custom, before Watkinson's year of office, for cutlery workers to keep

¹⁴A 1794 list describes the Stalker Wheel with 10 troughs and 14 workers in the tenancy of Joseph Ward, under the ownership of the Rev James Wilkinson and Philip Gell, who had inherited the Broom-hall estate (*Water Power on Sheffield's Rivers*, Ed Davis Crossley, Sheffield Trades Historical Society and University of Sheffield Division of Continuing Education, Joint Publication 1989).

¹⁵*Water Power on the Sheffield Rivers*, *ibid*.

¹⁶History of the Company of Cutlers, *ibid*, Vol.I, page 252.

left-overs arising from the fact that 14 blades (a grinder's dozen) and 13 handles (a dozen of the horn, wood and bone-scale crafts) were supplied for a dozen knives.

A vivid portrayal of the scathing satire to which Watkinson's name was subjected, as a result of his presiding over this controversy, is given in the 1920's handwritten and elaborately illustrated notes of Henry Taton's *Sheffield Vol.I* on page 53, where he draws a woodcut with a verse:

W—'S THIRTEEN

Indicated by FIVE PENKNIFE CUTLERS

*That Monster oppression behold how he talks
Keeps picking the bones of the poor as he walks
There's not a mechanic throughout the whole land
But what more or less feels the weight of his hand
That offspring of tyranny, baseness and pride
Our rights hath invaded and almost destroyed
May that man be banished who villainy screens
Ossides with big W— with his thirteen*

Alongside the words in this vitriolic portrayal of S.B.Ward's first father-in-law is a carved caricature of the 1787 Master Cutler in a broad brimmed hat and brandishing a knife, saying 'I WILL HAVE THIRTEEN'.

12.2.3 A 'peculiar favourite of fortune'

An interesting snippet of history relates to a list preserved among the papers of *Ben(bellows)*'s brother-in-law, the 1790 Master Cutler Mr Joseph Ward¹⁷. This shows that his eldest son, the 20 year old S.B.Ward (1770-1849), was amongst the 14 *peculiar favourites of fortune* of 1790.

This expression appears in a contemporary Newspaper account¹⁸ which records an annual custom of '*joyous festivities*' to inaugurate the Master Cutler at which he lavishly entertained '*gentleman of the town and neighbourhood at the Cutler's Hall*'. The following day '*an entertainment equally hospitable and elegant*' was given by the Mistress Cutler '*to the ladies when, according to a singular but long established usage, only a few gentlemen, the PECULIAR FAVOURITES OF FORTUNE, will be allowed to appear in the Company's rooms, to enjoy the honour of carving on this delightful occasion, for an illustrious bevy of beauty, taste and fashion.*'¹⁹.

It was etiquette that 8 of these '*peculiar favourites*' should be unmarried.

12.2.4 Mount Pleasant

Mount Pleasant was just 0.2 miles south of the Little Sheffield site of Plant's Yard. It was 1794 when the 24 year old S.B.Ward acquired this 17 year old property near his 52 year old uncle *Ben(bellows)* who had apparently moved just shortly before to live at the Little Sheffield site that was to become widely known as Plant's Yard.

An illustration of Mount Pleasant, dated to the time of S.B.Ward's occupancy, is shown in Figure 12.4²⁰.

In his standard work on the history of Sheffield²¹, Joseph Hunter (1819) includes a section headed MOUNT PLEASANT which begins:-

¹⁷*History of the Company of Cutlers*, *ibid*, Vol.1, page 214.

¹⁸The Iris, Thursday September 5th 1794.

¹⁹The 1804 Master Cutler curtailed much of the extravagance of the various Cutler's Feasts and the dinners to ladies ceased, it seems, in 1808.

²⁰Following S.B.Ward, Mount Pleasant was occupied by the Tillotson family and in 1874, after a brief period as an asylum, it became the abode of the Girls Charity School which moved there from Virgins Row, which is now St James Row adjoining the Cathedral. Mount Pleasant still stands, though more built up, and it is now used in part as an Adult Education and Community Centre for the area.

²¹Joseph Hunter (1819) *Hallamshire: The History and Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York*, page 217.

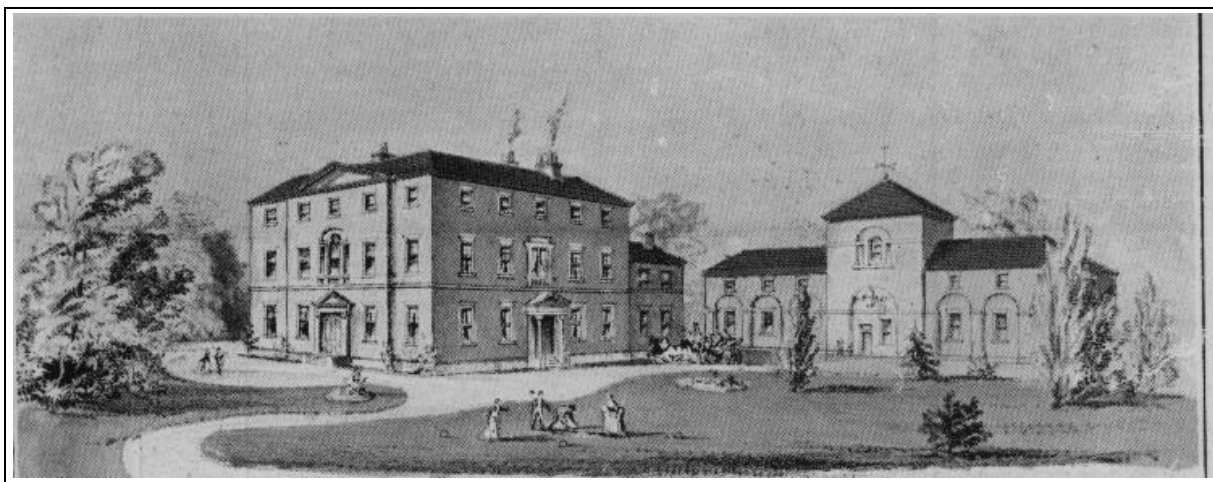


Figure 12.4: Mount Pleasant at the time of S.B.Ward

MOUNT PLEASANT. The house so-called, situated at High-field in this township, is now the property and residence of Samuel Broomhead Ward esquire. It was built by Francis Hurt Sitwell esquire²²...

12.2.5 The Freemen's Revolt (1785-1801)

In 1785, the recognised workers (i.e. the Journeymen Freemen) of the Company of Cutlers drew up a list of grievances against the increasingly progressive attitudes of the Company's officers such as their sanctioning a large number of apprentices who were not, as previously, mainly sons of the Company's Freemen. It seems that *Ben(bellows)* may have known the main protagonists on both sides of the ensuing dispute. By 1789, this controversy grew beyond a mere exchange of words when *Ben(bellows)*'s Coalpit Lane neighbour, Mr Enoch Trickett, who was the leader of the rebelling Freemen, demanded to see the Company's accounts and encouraged the Freemen's committee to petition Parliament, in 1789 and again in 1790²³.

The Cutlers Company secured the aid of a prominent MP, the now famous Mr Wilberforce, who suggested that the Freemen's bill should be replaced by one prepared by 'five local gentlemen of character and property'. This agreement was signed by the 1789 Master Cutler Thomas Tillotson and his then Warden, who was *Ben(bellows)*'s brother-in-law Joseph Ward, for the Company, as well as by *Ben(bellows)*'s neighbour Enoch and his brother James Trickett for the Journeymen.

Robert Eadon Leader²⁴ remarks that, though the journeymen celebrated the passing of the subsequent 1791 Act with a feast, the victory of Enoch Trickett's Freemen was a hollow one and they might well have spoken of those:

*"That palter with us in a double sense
That keep the word of promise to our ear
And break it to our hope."*

A further Act in 1801 was mainly just a simplified repetition of the 1791 Act.

²²Francis Hurt Sitwell was nephew to Francis Sitwell, Clerk to the Cutlers' Company in 1718-36 and Mount Pleasant had not been very long built when the Sitwell family sold it to S.B.Ward in 1794.

²³*Ben(bellows)*'s neighbour Mr Enoch Trickett, a filesmith, is famous in Sheffield history as the first person who dared to appear in the streets of Sheffield with an umbrella (*History of the Company of Cutlers*, *ibid*, Vol.I, pages 84 and 328).

²⁴*History of the Company of Cutlers*, *ibid*, Vol.I, page 88.

12.3 Peeps into the Past and some further clues

Although *Ben(bellows)* appears to have been less close to his nephew T.A.Ward than to the older nephew, S.B.Ward, the younger nephew warrants mention if only because his notebooks, letters and diary form the standard text on life in early nineteenth century Sheffield. In the book *'Peeps into the Past, being passages from the diary of Thomas Asline Ward'*, which was published in 1909, there are many insights, with moreover some references to *Ben(bellows)'s* family as will be described later below.

The cutlery merchant T.A.Ward is known especially as being one of the four great philanthropic reformers of early nineteenth century Sheffield²⁵.

12.3.1 Some extracts from the Introduction

Thomas Asline Ward was born on the 6th of July 1781 and he died on the 25th November 1871 ... The families with which he claimed kinship embraced many who gave tone to, and were most characteristic of, the Sheffield of his period.

(He was educated at the Grammar School²⁶. He had many literary and artistic acquaintances, including the sculptor Sir Francis Chantrey) ... Ward himself became fairly adept with his pen — more successfully, it may be admitted, in prose than in verse.... He perpetrated sermons ... and he delighted in the compilation of moving reports ... (He was a much valued friend of Joseph Hunter and contributed to his standard work on Hallamshire) ... Montgomery came to look to him for help on the 'Iris'; and the 'Independent' in its early years, before 1829, was edited by Ward.

Mr Ward was a great champion of freedom, and was always a sympathiser with people struggling for liberty ... In later phases of the Reform agitation, as President of the "Sheffield Political Union" he represented the Radical, rather than the Whig element of that association.

Most of the positions of honour at the disposal of his townsmen were placed within Mr Ward's reach. The mention of two must suffice. He served on the Cutlers' Company from 1809 to 1818, and again in 1833, being Master Cutler in 1816. He was a Town Trustee from 1817 to 1863, including a period of 18 years as Town Collector; and he was made a West Riding magistrate in 1836.

But these and other matters ... are on public record. The value of the diary is the insights it gives he spent .. few hours in his counting house ... Even these were often encroached upon by attendances at committees and public engagements; or, if not called abroad, he left ledgers for literature. The house of his parents, with whom he lived until 33 years of age, adjoined the works in Howard Street and in that he had a library²⁷ ... any interstices left .. commerce had to be content with such hours as were not bespoke in entertaining or being entertained ...

12.3.2 A reference to a premature bequeathal

A snippet from the book *Peeps into the Past*, dated to *Ben(bellows)'s* later years, concerns the birth of T.A.Ward's younger brother, John (b 20.1.1801). Falsely anticipating that she might not recover from her forthcoming 'hazard', T.A.Ward's mother (Sarah Asline, 1757-1829) wrote a long letter to her husband, Joseph Ward, who as already mentioned was *Ben(bellows)'s* brother-in-law. Amid wifely love, she expressed her wishes for the upbringing of her children and cautioned her husband to be careful to alter his will so that the younger children may not suffer great hardship through the eldest son (S.B.Ward, by a former wife) getting over much. Her requests for the disposal of her 'cloaths' (*sic*) include:

²⁵The other three were the journalist James Montgomery, the silver-plater Samuel Roberts and the gentleman Rowland Hodgson (*Sheffield; Its Story and Its Achievements*, Mary Walton, 1948).

²⁶The origins of Sheffield Grammar School can be traced back at least to 1564. In 1906 it was amalgamated with Collegiate School to form King Edward VII Grammar School (my own old school).

²⁷Howard Street was near the Pond Lane home of *Ben(bellows)'s* wife's step-father, Samuel Broomhead. In the summer, this Samuel's heir, Joseph Ward, and the family would retreat a mile from their Howard Street home to their country villa, Park House.

Mrs Plant, a black sattin (*sic*) petticoat, which is quilted, and black sattin (*sic*) cloak with grey fur.

Mrs Sampson, black silk gown and coat.

Mrs Plant, my bombazeen gown and cloak.

This Mrs Plant was quite clearly *Ben(bellows)'s* wife, Hannah. The Plants' daughter was called Mrs Sampson at that time (Figure 12.3) and this, no doubt, is the Mrs Sampson who is named above as another potential beneficiary. Other such bequests were made to Miss Goddard, Mary Ward, and a Mrs Trickett who will be mentioned again later in this chapter.

12.3.3 Some references to the Plants

Unfortunately, it is only just before *Ben(bellows)'s* 1806 death that T.A.Ward's *diaries* begin, in 1804, though there are a few items of interest in his earlier *notebooks*. These begin with an 1800 pocket book which starts in French, breaking into Latin and Italian. These notebooks and the subsequent diaries include an occasional reference to *Ben(bellows)'s* family.

1800 The French of the 19 year old T.A.Ward was not impeccable and the book gives a sample: "*J.Sampson & la famille di Morton prient du thé & du souper chez nous.*". This presumably relates to the Plants' daughter Mrs Sampson²⁸.

1802, June 16 "*Mrs Sampson married*" (*Ben(bellows)'s* daughter Mary Ward Plant married her second husband, Timothy Hancock).

1804, August 26 Mr Ward went with his father, mother and sisters to Hellaby (near Maltby, 12 miles to the east) to dine with Mr Sampson there.

1805, April 1 "*My Aunt Asline was buried in St Paul's by Mr Mackenzie ... The pall was supported by Mrs Trickett, Huntsman, Plant, Younge, and Morton, and Misses Younge and Wainwright.*" (Mrs William Huntsman, who is mentioned here alongside Mrs Plant, was the daughter-in-law of the famous inventor of cast (or crucible) steel, Benjamin Huntsman, 1704-76²⁹).

1805, October 29 In the evening "*I drank tea at Mr Plants's, and supped at J.Roberts' with a party of gentlemen.*".

1806, January 3 The editor notes the entry "*Mr Plant died.*" commenting "This was Benjamin Plant, whose wife was Hannah, sister of Mr Ward's father."³⁰

1807 The editor A.B.Bell notes that 'A feature of the life at Howard Street³¹ at this time is that Mr Ward's Aunt Plant appears to have made a practice of turning up with almost unflinching regularity at the Sunday dinner.'

1808 A.B.Bell notes 'The regular Sunday visits of Mrs Plant continued throughout the year; and, almost invariably, she had as her fellow guest on these occasions Mrs Trickett, of whom Mr Ward says: "*Her husband was a respectable baker, who set up his sons in business, one as a baker, the other as a silversmith, both of whom failed. Mrs T has long been a friend of my mother's family.*".' and R.E.Leader adds 'Mrs Plant, frequently mentioned as "Aunt Plant" was sister to Mr Ward, senior, widow of Benjamin Plant, Sheffield Moor.'

²⁸This entry is followed, in French, by mention of Mrs Plant's brother, Joseph Ward, who on the 18th August attended a birthday dinner for the Duke of Norfolk at the Tontine.

²⁹Born in Lincolnshire in 1704, Huntsman had first worked as a clockmaker in Doncaster. About 1740 he moved to Handsworth near Sheffield where he experimented to make finer steel, suitable for his clock springs. He perfected his process by completely melting the steel in clay crucibles subjected to great heat by means of coke. Huntsman did not patent his invention and although his work was carried out in the utmost secrecy his idea was finally copied.

³⁰Similar brevity, without any mention of ceremony by T.A.Ward, appears later on 17 Nov 1814 with "*I married Ann Lewin.*".

³¹Howard Street, near Pond Lane, was at that time the home of T.A.Ward and his parents, Joseph Ward and Sarah (née Asline).

1810 Near the beginning of this year A.B.Bell notes ‘Mr Ward’s friends were marrying ... There were deaths too — our old friend “Aunt Plant”, Mr Joseph Ward’s sister; Joseph, a young son of Danniell Brammall at Inchbald’s School³²; and a particularly sad tragedy in which one of the Mount Pleasant nieces lost her life³³.’

12.3.4 The Tricketts and Social Contrasts

A family association between the Plants and the Tricketts *might have had* some of its origins in earlier times, around 1770, when the Plants apparently lived near the 1771 Master Cutler, William Trickett, in Coal-pit Lane³⁴. The recurrent mention in T.A.Ward’s diaries of a Mrs Trickett in the company of Mrs Plant might suggest that this retainer was subsequently assisting *Ben(bellows)’s* widow and R.E.Leader notes:

With regard to Mrs Trickett ... on one occasion he (T.A.Ward) says: “*Mrs Trickett dined, etc., with us, as in fact she often does when I fail to notice it. She is an old friend of the family, and in humble circumstances; has seen the expiring moments of many members of it.*” ... She had some small cottage property which Mr Ward managed for her, periodically attending at the ‘Green Man’ to receive the rents, and to enjoy a gossip with the tenants over their mugs of ale.

Shortly after Mrs Plant’s death, T.A.Ward reported (19 Oct 1812):

“*I have been attending at a public-house to receive some small rents for a decayed old lady*” (Mrs Trickett) “*whose petty money affairs I manage for her. She has 5 or 6 tenants, poor, and like too many of their townsmen complaining ... It is their opinion that the kingdom cannot exist, without a change, till Christmas, and they seem scarcely startled at the idea of a revolution ... I can not help smiling (though it is really grievous) to find them so obstinate in their ignorance and misconceptions ...*”

Such everyday details command in the Diary as much attention as the Wards’ associations with for example the prominent MP and famous slave-trade abolitionist, William Wilberforce. *Ben(bellows)’s* nephew, S.B.Ward, for example joined Wilberforce’s election committee in the the so-called ‘Great Yorkshire’ national Election of 1807.

This Tory association was despite the fact that the Wards maintained associations with the opposing Whig House of Wentworth which can be simply explained by the fact that the Wentworth Earl Fitzwilliam was Lord of the Manor of Ecclesall. The Fitzwilliams had inherited power from the last Marquis of Rockingham, Charles Watson Wentworth, when this British Prime Minister and Ecclesall Lord died in office in 1782. The Marquis was buried at York Minster on 20 July 1782 and Lordship of the Manor of Ecclesall passed to his nephew, the Hon William Wentworth Fitzwilliam, and heirs³⁵.

A particularly lavish Whig Wentworth ball contrasts with the poor circumstances in the ‘Green Man’ and, in 1834, *Ben(bellows)’s* nephew T.A.Ward records:

³²This is the Brammall of Bram(m)all Lane, which is now widely known as Sheffield United’s football ground and one of the Yorkshire county team’s cricket grounds. Danniell Brammall bought the Spurr Wheel in 1802 at a time when Benjamin Plant is recorded as its rate-payer.

³³*Ben(bellows)’s* nephew, S.B.Ward, was walking in the fields near his house with his wife, two sons, three daughters, and a nursemaid — all had safely crossed the swollen River Sheaf on a narrow wooden bridge, except for the nursemaid and 2 year old Anne when the bridge broke and only the nursemaid was rescued alive.

³⁴Despite its name, Coal-pit Lane was one of the more desirable addresses in Sheffield; most of the houses had grass plots to the front and adjoined open fields leading to the head of Little Sheffield Moor. The 1771 Master Cutler, William Trickett, lived on Coal-pit Lane and he is remembered mostly for the broad local dialect of his brother, Enoch, at Cutler’s Feasts in the presence of nobility. Enoch Trickett still appears in 1793 rate books with 7 houses in Coal-pit Lane, which was subsequently renamed Cambridge Street.

³⁵Fitzwilliam was dismissed as Lord Lieutenant by the Prince Regent in 1820, following his failure to condone the Peterloo Massacre of poor protesters in Manchester, and the Lieutenantcy was then conferred on Lord Lascelles of the opposing Tory House of Harewood.

“The invitations in this neighbourhood have been thought rather scanty. My brother, S.B.Ward and three daughters, were there ... ”

This ball was to mark the coming of age of the Wentworth Lord Milton, who was being trained for high national office, but the prominent Whig House of Wentworth suffered irreparable damage when Milton was cut off the following November. This was shortly after Sheffield had been granted their first two Parliamentary seats, in 1832, and T.A.Ward had stood unsuccessfully as an ‘Advanced Liberal’, the popular champion of the uninfluential poor.

12.4 A seemingly relevant oil painting

An oil painting, believed to be from the Wards’ family collection³⁶, is known as ‘*A visit to the Lawyer*’. It shows, towards its left side, a well-dressed gentleman standing by a table and some books and, towards the right and more to the fore, a more elderly man seated and resting his hand on an upright walking stick which forms a central feature of the picture. It is recalled that this painting was displayed in a 1965 Sheffield exhibition to celebrate the re-opening of the Mappin Art Gallery in Weston Park³⁷. This painting was displayed with historical notes that it fell between the contrasting episodes of the ‘Thirteen to a Dozen’ controversy and the famed philanthropy of the benevolent Sheffield reformer Thomas Asline Ward. Until recently a large oil-wash copy of this same painting (signed ?Vaute) was held by my own family; it was said to represent a Plant ancestor and, in the light of current knowledge, it could very credibly have been handed down from the estate of Benjamin Plant (1742-1806)³⁸.

It seems possible that this painting may perhaps portray a meeting between Samuel Broomhead Ward and his elderly uncle Benjamin Plant. The reference to ‘lawyer’ in the supposed title has been taken to be an allusion to S.B.Ward’s offices in the Manorial Courts though an alternative explanation, if the painting does indeed portray a meeting between Ward and a Plant, could be that it might relate to *Ben(bellows)’s* actions to put his affairs into better order around the time of his 1805 will.

By the time of *Ben(bellows)’s* 1805 will, he was 63 and S.B.Ward was 35, which it appears could roughly match the ages in this painting, provided that some allowance is made for a story that S.B.Ward aged noticeably after the death (aged 27) of his first wife, the daughter of the ill-famed W—, in 1803. Besides Benjamin (1742-1806), other Plants who were connected with this will include the yeoman farmer James Plant (1740-1825) but a more plausible explanation of why a copy of this painting was apparently passed down *my* branch of the Plant family would arise if the depicted Plant were either *Ben(bellows)* (1742-1806), who is known to have been a close friend of S.B.Ward, or perhaps his brother the farmer Thomas Plant (1745-1827) of Clowne whose eldest son, *W^m(1)* (1772-1848), is mentioned as a beneficiary in Benjamin’s will.

12.5 The unseen hand of Benjamin Plant

Almost as soon as nineteenth century Sheffield began to enter the spotlight of T.A.Ward’s diary, his uncle, the bellows maker Benjamin Plant, breathed his last breath. Thus, within the celebrated vision of the young T.A.Ward, Benjamin is confined to the penumbra. We are left largely to guess at *Ben(bellows)’s* precise role in the Sheffield of his times though his indirect influence may well pervade the known account of the Sheffield that he left, as given in his young nephew’s diary. By 1805, T.A.Ward’s elder brother had entered more fully into adulthood and it is S.B.Ward who appears in Benjamin’s will, as its first trustee and a beneficiary.

³⁶It is possible that this painting is now in the possession of a descendant of S.B.Ward, Harriet Countess of Ranfurly.

³⁷The Mappin Art Gallery had been closed since its having been destroyed in enemy bombing in 1940.

³⁸It seems that this painting, which was in very poor condition, may have been handed down the line *Ben(bellows)* - *W^m(1)* - *W^m(2a)* - James - Tom to my late father Tom whereafter it was sadly lost around the time of his death.

Information about *Ben(bellows)*'s likely role, at earlier times, can be gleaned partly from the records of this epoch's most authoritative local official, the Master Cutler. Even though Benjamin's own trade of bellows making was rather outside the wide disciplines that qualified for the so-called Company of Cutlers we may note that, just as bellows were crucial to contemporary metal crafts, so Benjamin may have formed a crux of some contemporary events. It seems that the close-knit family connections of old Sheffield (section 12.1.2) may have played their part in bringing about such events as the Master Cutler being called Jos.Ibberson in 1759 and Peter Spurr in 1781 and that, at least by the time of more-detailed 1790's records, *Ben(bellows)* occupied Ibberson Lands which included the Spurr (or Spurgear) Wheels (Chapters 11 and 13). The naming of the Spurr Wheel may have arisen from the name of the 1781 Master Cutler, Peter Spurr, whose apparent family connections with *Ben(bellows)* provides the credentials for Peter Spurr's being associated with this Wheel.

It seems difficult to dismiss some events as just coincidence. A step-uncle of *Ben(bellows)*'s wife, Joseph Broomhead, refused 1771 Mastership, and the office passed instead to Benjamin Plant's neighbour, William Trickett. This was somewhat before the times of the Freeman's Revolt (1785-1801), the 'Thirteen to a Dozen' controversy (1787) and the Broom-hall conflagration (1791) but one might wonder, for example, if *Ben(bellows)* lent a hand in passing Mastership from a rich uncle of his wife to a neighbour, perhaps because it was thought that this neighbour was more acceptable to the Freeman. Certainly a Trickett connection persists through to the 1790s when the Freeman's Revolt involved William Trickett's brothers Enoch and James, as well as *Ben(bellows)*'s brother-in-law, Joseph Ward. Although the details are not clear, it can be added that the name Trickett recurs later in that a Mrs Trickett is to be found closely associated with *Ben(bellows)*'s wife in Ward documents between 1801 and 1812.

The Masterships of *Ben(bellows)*'s close distaff kin (viz. Benjamin Broomhead 1784, Joseph Ward 1790, S.B.Ward 1798 and T.A.Ward 1816) were interspersed, in 1796, by a year as Master Cutler for J.F.Smith whose Coal-pit Lane property was apparently surrounded by Benjamin's. It seems likely, as indicated in Chapter 11, that *Ben(bellows)* may have formed a link of particular importance between the Smiths and the Wards that may have led on to T.A.Ward's close friendship with Smith's young relative and protégé, Joseph Hunter, prior to the publication of Hunter's celebrated 1819 history on '*Hallamshire*'. The genesis of Sheffield (now Britain's fifth largest city), through the centuries up to the late nineteenth century, is illuminated perhaps most famously by Hunter's *Hallamshire* and T.A.Ward's *Peeps into the Past* and the creative friendship between these two luminaries can arguably be attributed to Benjamin Plant.

Ben(bellows)'s title '*Benjamin Plant of Sheffield Moor*' appears in the published works of his nephew and his nephew's friend, viz. Ward's *Peeps into the Past* and Hunter's *Familiae Minorae Gentium*. It is not clear exactly how *Ben(bellows)* acquired this title and whether it accrued from more than just the known fact that some of his properties lay around the edges of this site of Sheffield's first major expansion of the coming Industrial Age. The occupations of *Ben(bellows)* and his presumed brother John Plant may have helped to build Sheffield's forges and inter-mixed dwellings and such bellows-making and brick-laying activities, from the two apparent bases of *Plant's Yard* near the Moor's head and foot, may have helped earn *Ben(bellows)* his '*Sheffield Moor* title'.

Ben(bellows)'s historical role may have related as much to such technological developments as to his relationships with Sheffield's Master Cutlers and the subsequent chroniclers of Sheffield. He clearly had '*connections*' with important events in Sheffield's history — for example, Mrs Plant in her late years is known to have been associated with the son and successor of the famous Benjamin Huntsman. We can accordingly surmise that, just as Benjamin's bellows may have been developed to help temper malleability into Huntsman's cast steel, so *Ben(bellows)* himself may have helped to breath extensibility into Sheffield's developing scene. Benjamin Plant's influence may have extended into the development of Sheffield's industrial plants — he also seems central to the establishment of the Plant name in Sheffield, as will be described further in subsequent chapters.