

THE BROGDEN PIONEERS OF THE EARLY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN MID-GLAMORGAN

L.S.Higgins

Transcribed from the National Library of Wales Journal Vol XX No 3 September 1978 pp 240 - 252

These Brogdens, an enterprising Furness father and his eldest sons, already important railway contractors in the Midlands and the North, acquired iron and coal undertakings in Mid-Glamorgan in the middle of the last century and became the pioneers of its early industrial development. The failure of their plan to survive during the depression in the South Wales iron and coal trade in the late 70s was the first of the misfortunes that ultimately ruined them financially.

John Brogden, the father, was born on the 2nd of February 1798 on a farm in the Furness district of Lancashire, and he worked with his father on the farm until, when a young man, he left home to make his way in the world. In 1822 he married Sarah Hannah, only daughter of Alexander Mc William of Hazelhurst near Ashton-under-Lyne, and they made their home in Manchester, where they remained for many years. Their family consisted of five sons and two daughters. The eldest of the sons, John, was born in Manchester in 1823, and he died very suddenly at his home, Lightburn House, Ulverston, on the 6th of November 1855 at the early age of 32. The second son, Alexander, was born in Manchester on the 3rd of November 1825, and in its Cathedral on the 6th of September 1848 he married Ann, daughter of James Garstang of the same city. During the 1860s they resided at Woodlands, Holme Island, Grange-over-Sands, Lancashire, and in 1868 he was elected the first member of Parliament for Wednesbury, Staffordshire. He died in Croydon in November 1892. Henry, the third son, was born in Manchester in 1827 and died in Hale, near Altrincham, Cheshire in 1913. James, the fourth son, was born on the 7th of April 1832, also in Manchester, and spent most of his adult life in Mid-Glamorgan, at first at Tondy and later at Porthcawl, where he died in January 1907. The fifth son, George William Hargreaves Brogden, known as George within the family and amongst his friends, was born in 1842 and died at his home in London in 1892. John Brogden's elder daughter, Sarah Hannah, married Samuel Budgett, son of a well-known Manchester merchant. His younger daughter, Mary Jane, referred to as Jenny in the family correspondence, married William Billing in Manchester Cathedral on the 18th of December 1867, and at one time they lived at Dunham Grange, Bowdon, Cheshire.

The four sons, John, Alexander, Henry and James, in turn when their education had been completed, assisted their father in his many undertakings and later became his partners in the family firm, John Brogden & Sons, which he formed. This partnership of father and sons constructed, promoted, owned and worked railways in the Midlands and the North, mined and exported Furness haematite ore, owned ironworks and collieries in South Wales and invested in a number of bold and important enterprises. It ultimately became insolvent and was wound up in 1880. The youngest son, George, was too young to join the family partnership, and therefore he was not involved in either its early success or its ultimate failure.

In 1832 John Brogden, having lived in Manchester for some years and having engaged in many business transactions with the authority, successfully tendered for a contract in which he undertook to carry out the cleansing and watering of the town. Not long afterwards he was again engaged in carrying out contracts for municipal authorities. In 1843, as a partner of Joseph (later Sir Joseph) Whitworth, he contracted to sweep the streets of Manchester with Whitworth's patent machines. In the next year he and Whitworth entered into a similar contract with the Westminster authority. Brogden then established an office in London in order to supervise the working of this contract and also to control more effectively the railway contracts he had undertaken.

In 1838, with the financial backing of a banker who appreciated his qualities, Brogden successfully tendered for the construction of the first section of the Manchester and Leeds (later the Lancashire and Yorkshire) Railway. The contract, which involved much heavy work and included the construction of a long viaduct with high arches, was so successfully carried out that Brogden was invited to tender for certain sections of the Manchester and Birmingham part of the London and North Western Railway, then being constructed, and his tenders were accepted. The result was that from about 1845 Brogden, with the assistance of his eldest sons, very largely devoted himself to the numerous activities connected with his many railway contracts. Among the lines he constructed were the Ashton-under-Lyne branch of the London and North Western Railway, the Manchester, Altrincham and Bowdon Railway, and the East Lancashire section of the Lancashire and Yorkshire system.

The Brogdens had also become interested in the exploitation of the very high quality haematite deposits in Furness and in the export of the ore to South Staffordshire and South Wales. They had taken leases of ore-bearing territory, and by the end of 1850 they were developing mines and installing winding machines and pumps. Mineral statistics reveal that in 1855 'Brogden & Co' was one of the eight main haematite companies then operating in Furness and that in the following year 200,000 tons (43%) of the ore shipped from Barrow came to South Wales. In March 1857 the Brogdens and a friend leased several hundred additional acres of ore-bearing territory.

During the 1850s their interest in the haematite mines involved the Brogdens in railway promotion as well as construction. Nine-tenths of the ore mined in Furness was carried by the Furness Railway to Barrow to be shipped. The resulting prosperity of the railway company led to increased

interest in railway promotion in the area and to rival schemes being proposed. In the absence of a railway the Brogdens sent their ore by road to South Staffordshire and, because the indentations of the rivers Kent and Leven involved a long detour, they proposed the construction of a railway from Ulverston across the estuaries to join the Lancaster and Carlisle Railways at Carnforth. Since this anticipated moves by others and involved major engineering problems, it became necessary for the Brogdens to take full responsibility for the line.

In 1847 Brogden and his three eldest sons promoted the railway company, and they later obtained the Ulverston and Lancaster Railway Act, which received the Royal Assent on the 24th of July 1851. The company held its first meeting on the 8th of August, and the directors were John Brogden, senior, his three eldest sons - John (vice—chairman), Alexander and Henry, James Garstang (Alexander's father-in-law) and Joseph (later Sir Joseph) Paxton (Brogden's friend). The Brogdens had chosen a route that crossed the tidal estuaries of the rivers Kent and Leven in Morecambe Bay and about eight miles that was covered by the sea at every tide. This required the construction of solid stone-faced embankments on very uncertain foundations, and the erection of open viaducts over the estuaries. It also involved overcoming the difficulties resulting from the rapidly moving masses of tidal water beating against and covering the uncompleted work at every tide. This was, undoubtedly, the boldest and most difficult piece of railway construction undertaken by the Brogdens. In fact, many experienced people were of the opinion that the project was bound to end in failure. Despite the difficulties and the forecasts of ultimate failure, the undertaking was carried through with complete success, and the line was opened for single line mineral traffic on the 10th of August 1857. The successful completion of the task was undoubtedly due to the perseverance and enterprise of Brogden and his sons. Financially, however, the venture was not as successful. At the end of 1857 Alexander Brogden was seeking a substantial loan to meet the accumulated debt, and the line did not begin to pay until December 1860. In December 1861 it was leased to its rival, the Furness Railway Company.

The Brogdens engaged in a number of activities other than railway construction and haematite ore mining. The father executed a contract for the provision of sluices and a tidal gate at St. Germans in Norfolk, one of the outlets of the Fen marshes. He also joined a friend in a lease of the South Staffordshire Railway which they held and worked for six years. In conjunction with others, he was also an active promoter of the Mont Cenis Summit Railway. In 1851 John, the eldest son, and his brother Alexander purchased the North Shore Cotton Mills in Liverpool and operated them successfully until they were destroyed by fire in 1853.

The exacting demands John Brogden had made upon himself during his long life of constant physical and mental effort told upon his health in later years, and soon after the completion of the Ulverston and Lancaster Railway he commenced a gradual retirement from active participation in his business concerns and left them in the hands of his sons. He gradually deteriorated and died at his home, Raglan House, Sale, Cheshire, on the 9th of December 1869 in his 72nd year. He was a remarkable man, not having received any advanced education or any training either as a contractor or as an engineer. His knowledge and his experience had been acquired in the hard way, through the work he had undertaken and carried out. Unaided by wealth or influence, he ultimately attained a position of prominence in the industrial and financial world which brought him into close association with men of rank and wealth.ⁱ

When the Brogdens had just begun the construction of the Ulverston and Lancaster Railway, their enterprising and speculative natures led them to embark upon a venture as iron-masters in South Wales, to which for many years the bulk of the ore shipped from Barrow had been sent. Since Porthcawl appears in a list of the South Wales ports then importing the ore, the Brogdens must have had contacts in the industrial area served by the port and must therefore have been acquainted with the difficult financial position of Sir Robert Price, the owner of the ironworks at Tondy. It was then known as the Glamorgan Iron and Coal Works, because its two furnaces had been erected by the company of that name. In December 1853, the Brogdens purchased from Sir Robert Price for £10,000 the leases of the lands and mines he held as part of the works. In the following January he agreed to sell them the works itself for £35,000ⁱⁱ and John Brogden & Sons took them over on the 2nd February 1854. In the July they had acquired from Mrs. Jane H. Nicholl the leases of the farms and mines previously held by Sir Robert Price. The family partnership had thus acquired the ownership of the works and under leases of varying length the right to mine coal and ironstone under certain lands at Tondy, Tir Gunter and Park, Bettws and Tywith in the Llynfi valley.

James Brogden, then twenty-two and the junior partner, was sent to take charge of the undertaking. His task was not an easy one, because lack of capital had resulted in the works having been operated inefficiently for some time. A testimonial made to him on the occasion of his marriage in September 1859 and signed by the manager, the mineral agent and the cashier refers to his having entered upon the works in the most discouraging circumstances and to the fact that he had grappled manfully with the difficulties of his position. However, he brought in new men, and the weekly 'make' of iron of less than 80 tons was quickly increased to 100 tons and later to between 500 and 600 tons. The works was also extended and eventually included 2 blast furnaces, 3 rolling mills, 23 puddling furnaces, 11 ball furnaces, a forge and 100 bee-hive coke ovens. Park Slip was also opened, and the works was connected to the Llynfiⁱⁱⁱ and Ogmore Railway.

James Brogden had married Helen Dunbar Mime, a grand-daughter of Lady Helen Dunbar of Tunbridge Wells, in St. George's, Hanover Square in September 1859. The marriage proved a failure, and his hesitation in divorcing her until June 1865 was the beginning of an estrangement between him and his brother Alexander, which was revived by subsequent events and ultimately affected relationships within both the family and the partnership.

Soon after 1860 the prospects of the Tondy and Maesteg areas improved and in 1863 John Brogden & Sons obtained a new lease of the Tywith lands in the Llynfi valley, from which they raised iron and coal in large quantities. In the following year they leased the Garth land and proceeded to sink the Garth pit and to erect coke ovens, which they worked until 1877 when the depression in trade resulted in their closure.^{iv}

The enterprising Brogdens decided to extend their coal mining operations to Ogmore Valley in which they had leased extensive mineral property. At first the firm opened levels at the top of the valley, but in 1865 it sank the Wyndham pit and opened the Tynwydd level, both of which it worked until 1872 when they were taken over by the new joint stock company then formed. In order to provide an outlet for their coal, the Brogdens promoted the Ogmore Valley Railway company of which, since the father was in semi-retirement, Alexander, then the eldest surviving son, was the chairman. John, the eldest son, had died in 1855. The Act, which was obtained in July 1863, authorised the construction of a standard gauge^v locomotive railway from Nantymoel at the head of the valley to a junction with the Llynvi Valley Railway at Tondy. It also gave the company power to lay a third rail along the existing broad-gauge locomotive railway from Tondy to Porthcawl to enable its trains to run over that section of the Llynvi Valley Railway. The line was opened for the through working of mineral trains from Nantymoel to the dock at Porthcawl on the 1st August 1865.

The Brogden developments in the Ogmore valley made it necessary for them provide a larger and better equipped outlet for their coal than the old tidal harbour at Porthcawl. Because they had constructed their Ogmore Valley Railway on the standard gauge, the transfer of coal involved at the interchange station with South Wales broad-gauge railway at Stormy prevented their obtaining access to the docks at Cardiff over that line. The fact that two gauges were involved also made it impossible for them to obtain an outlet from Blackmill by way of their Ely Valley Extension Railway. They therefore decided to construct a new dock at Porthcawl, and in order to do so they secured the co-operation of the Llynvi Valley Railway Company, which then owned the old tidal dock. The two companies obtained the Llynvi and Ogmore Railways Act in June 1864, empowering them to make improvements at the Porthcawl harbour. It authorised among other works the construction, at the northern end of the existing basin, of a dock with a southern entrance and gates, and it provided for a committee consisting of two from each company to own and manage their harbour.

The new dock covered 71/2 acres. It had a wharf of 2,300 ft., was equipped with four high level loading stages, and provided room and appliances for the shipping 5000 tons of coal a day. It was completed at a cost of £250,000 and was opened on the 22nd of July 1867. R. P. Brereton was the engineer and William Tredwell the contractor. Brereton had been I. K. Brunel's chief assistant and Tredwell had constructed the Furness Railway.

In the meantime, in July 1866, the Llynvi Valley and Ogmore Valley Railways Amalgamation Act had created the Llynvi and Ogmore Railway, and Alexander Brogden, then the senior partner in the family firm, was the deputy chairman. Therefore, by the end of 1867, John Brogden & Sons had acquired a half share in the ownership of the new dock and of the unified railway system that served their undertakings.

At the end of January 1865, James Brogden, on behalf of the family partnership, purchased the valuable thirty-two acres of land adjoining the new dock at Porthcawl, and in May 1867, with the intention of establishing a town on this land, he granted building leases on the western side of what he planned was to be its main street and was to be named John Street in honour of the head of the family firm. This development was not proceeded with by his brother Alexander when he later assumed control in Tondy. However, when John Brogden & Sons was dissolved in 1880, this land was purchased by Mrs. James Brogden, and she and her husband established on it the nucleus of the modern town of Porthcawl.

When John Brogden, senior, died in December 1869, Alexander, then the eldest partner, assumed his father's position as the head of the family firm and came to Tondy to take over the control of its Mid-Glamorgan undertakings. He chose to reside in the vacant home of the co-respondent in his brother James's divorce, despite the very strong protests of James and his offer to vacate Tondy House for him. James greatly resented his brother's action, and the relationship that developed between them must have deprived the partnership of the co-operation essential to the successful solution of its many industrial and financial problems.

Towards the end of 1870 the New Zealand government authorised the colony's first major railway construction programme. It entered into negotiations with John Brogden & Sons, and James Brogden went out to New Zealand to complete them. He left Liverpool on the 19th of August 1871 and returned to England early in 1873. The diary he kept during his visit shows that he was engaged in protracted and difficult negotiations. The Brogdens first proposed a very comprehensive building programme involving an expenditure of some £4,500,000 which the New Zealand government rejected, and the modified proposals they subsequently made were also turned down. However, in 1872 the Company was given six contracts for sections of railway totalling 159 miles of construction at a cost of £808,000. In order to carry out these contracts, the firm sent out a fleet of fifteen ships carrying more than 2,000 navvies with wives, children and equipment. Despite the scale of these preparations and the reputation the firm enjoyed in this country, evidence in New Zealand reveals that the Brogdens were not more successful than the local contractors.

The New Zealand venture by John Brogden & Sons undoubtedly turned out to be a great disappointment. The first proposals the Brogdens made indicate that they originally saw the project as an opportunity of taking over the colony's whole railway construction programme: it ended, however, in their obtaining only half a dozen relatively small contracts. The venture was also not a success financially. Some Brogden correspondence relating to 1879 contains references to the firm's outstanding claims against the New Zealand Government and to a proposal to send James out again to press for payment. Evidence from New Zealand, however, reveals that its government rejected the claim by the Brogdens that large sums due to them under the terms of their contracts had been unfairly withheld.

John Brogden & Sons also had railway interests in Holland. It held the concession for the construction of about 50 miles of railway, the Tilburg and Nympeguen in North Brabant and Guelderland, which formed part of the Dutch South Eastern Railway and a new direct route from London

to Berlin via Flushing. Brogden correspondence also contains references to their dispute with the Dutch South Eastern Railway Company and, since John Brogden & Sons held £15000 worth of this company's bonds in 1876, the dispute might also have been a financial one.

In the early 1870s, during a short period of good prices and prosperity in the coal and iron industries, the Brogden brothers decided to form a joint stock company, to take over and control the coal and iron undertakings in Tondy and the Llynfi and Ogmore Valleys. Therefore, on the 17th of August 1871, two days before leaving for New Zealand, James Brogden appointed his two brothers, Alexander and Henry, as attorneys to do in his name whatever they should in their discretion think fit in order to establish such a company. Following the completion of the negotiations and agreements involved, a new company, the Llynvi, Tondy and Ogmore Coal and Iron Company Limited, was incorporated in 1872. Alexander Brogden was the chairman of its board of eight directors, and its capital of £550,000 was divided into 11,000 shares of £50 each. Henry Brogden later became the managing director. The new company took over the properties of John Brogden & Sons at Tondy and in the Llynvi and Ogmore Valleys, and purchased those of the Llynvi Vale Coal and Iron Company and the Maesteg Ironworks Company. The property of the new company included, in addition to some 14,000 acres of coalfield and the collieries, two blast furnaces, forges and mills at Tondy, four blast furnaces, forges and mills at Llynfi and three blast furnaces at Maesteg. The strike of the colliers in South Wales in 1873 was settled in the undertakings of this company when Alexander Brogden, on the payment of a heavy penalty, withdrew from the Colliery Owner's Association and granted the demands of the men.

However, the improvement in the coal and iron trade was very temporary, and the company found it increasingly difficult to survive. The development of the Bessemer steel process and the increasing importation of high grade Spanish ore made the works unremunerative and it became necessary for the company to construct new Bessemer furnaces and a new rolling mill. Ultimately, however, the efforts to stave off disaster proved futile, because it became impossible to keep up the interest payments on two 6 per cent debenture issues — £150000 on the Tondy and Ogmore Valley properties and £100000 on the Llynfi Valley properties. In 1878 the holders applied to the Court for the appointment of a Receiver, and Mr. John Joseph Smith was appointed in that capacity. Their amalgamation venture having failed, Alexander and Henry Brogden left South Wales.

The family firm, the brothers Alexander, Henry and James, with offices at 21 Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster, was also soon in difficulty. It became involved in disputed claims, and one of these proved to be both unsuccessful and very costly. The firm owned the Bwlhfa Colliery in the Aberdare Valley, and since the beginning of 1870 it had supplied weekly quantities of Bwlhfa coal to the Metropolitan Railway Company for its locomotives. Following complaints with regard to the regularity of its deliveries, these were discontinued without notice being given of the intention to do so. The railway company maintained that a draft agreement approved by Alexander Brogden in December 1871 was, in fact, a contract requiring two calendar months' notice to terminate it and brought an action against John Brogden & Sons to recover damages for breach of contract. The action was tried at the Surrey Spring Assizes of 1873, when judgment was given for the railway company, subject to a special case. This came before the Court of Common Pleas, which also gave judgment for the railway company and assessed the damages at £9,643. The Brogdens took the case to the Court of Appeal and subsequently to the House of Lords, which in July 1877 affirmed the judgment complained of, and dismissed the appeal with costs.

The failure of their attempt to take over the coal and iron undertakings in Mid-Glamorgan and the resulting loss of their own very valuable properties, the financially very disappointing results of their New Zealand venture, their very costly litigation with the Metropolitan Railway Company and the money problems connected with their father's will ultimately resulted in John Brogden & Sons becoming insolvent. Subsequently, On the 31st of July 1880, the partnership between Alexander Brogden, Henry Brogden and James Brogden, trading as John Brogden & Sons and carrying on business as contractors and coal and iron masters at No. 52 Queen Victoria Street in the City of London, was dissolved as from the 26th of July 1880 by an order of the Chancery Division of Her Majesty's High Court of Justice. The result of the failure of the family firm was described in a letter written by the son of one of the partners as 'a plunge from well-being into poverty'.

On the 11th January 1884 the liquidations of both Alexander and Henry Brogden were announced in the *London Gazette*. They had presented petitions for liquidation estimating their liabilities upwards of £500,000 with assets of £3,830. Later their creditors met and resolved that the debtors' estates should be liquidated by agreement and appointed a trustee and committee of inspection. The debtors appeared before a registrar of the Bankruptcy Court on the 5th and 9th of February 1884 and made application for the registration of the resolution of their creditors. James Brogden contested the validity of the resolution on the grounds that the debtors' statement did not sufficiently set out the liabilities and assets of John Brogden & Sons, and the registrar adjourned further consideration of the application to enable the parties to produce additional evidence. The adjourned meeting was held on the 26th of April when, after cross-examination of Alexander Brogden, James withdrew his opposition and the creditors' resolution was registered. Apart from the sensational character of the financial end to the business career of the person who had been mainly responsible for the affairs of the Brogdens since their father's death, these proceedings reveal the unsatisfactory relationship existing between the brothers, who since then had formed the family partnership.

The failure of the Brogdens' 1872 Mid-Glamorgan Joint-Stock Company and of John Brogden & Sons was followed by serious disagreement within the family and ultimately by a resort to legal action by one of its members. John Brogden, the father, in his will, which he signed on the 25th of October 1867, made bequests to his children who were not his partners in the family firm, but because his money was locked up in the undertakings of the firm he directed that these bequests should not be paid until the expiration of five years after his death. One of these was £10,000 to his daughter Mary Jane, later Mrs. Billing. In addition to this legacy, in a settlement which he made when she married Williams Billing in December 1867, he covenanted to pay the trustees of the settlement £10,000 within five years of his death.

Since John Brogden, senior, died in December 1869, Mrs. Billing's legacy became due for payment on December 1874 and, if not already paid, the £10,000 to the trustees of her marriage settlement also became due. However, debenture shares in a colliery company accepted in 1877 by her trustee, Samuel Budgett, as security for the payment of her marriage settlement proved to be very inadequate, and no money due from her father's estate to pay his bequest to her had been provided when the partnership was dissolved in July 1880. Mrs. Billing therefore brought an action against the executors of her father's will, her brothers Alexander, Henry and James, and her trustees, her brothers Alexander, and James, and her sister's husband, Samuel Budgett, for the non-payment of the legacy and debt. The case came up for trial in the Chancery Division on the 4th of February 1886, and judgment was given on the 9th of August 1887. The judge found that the defendants had committed a breach of trust and were liable to make good the £20,000 and to pay Mrs. Billing's costs in the case. Since the Brogdens concerned were insolvent, Samuel Budgett appealed, but on the 8th of May 1888 his appeal was disallowed and he was held to be liable. These Brogdens, already in financial difficulty, were now involved in legal actions within the family.

Alexander Brogden died at 88 Lansdowne Road, Croydon, on the 26th of November 1892, aged 67, from injuries and burns received when, after having been ill for sometime, he fell against the firegrate in getting up from his chair. He left a widow and a married daughter, his son having died in 1885. The Probate Court on the 10th of June 1893 granted his widow the probate and administration of a will, which in a sworn affidavit she declared her husband had made between 1862 and 1867, but which could not be found following a fire in September 1892 in the repository in which it was kept. The probate shows the gross value of his estate as £380, and according to his widow's affidavit the value of his personal estate and effects was under £100.

After the death of his father, Henry Brogden became very closely associated with the financial and industrial activities of his brother Alexander, but this relationship was ultimately terminated by the failure of the Llynvi, Tondy, and Ogmre Coal and Iron Company and by their liquidation. Henry then returned to Cheshire and lived in retirement for many years at Hale Lodge, Hale, near Altrincham, a property he had owned for more than half a century. He died there on the 21st of June 1913 in his 87th year, and his will was in favour of his sister, Sarah Hannah, the widow of the Samuel Budgett in the Billing v. Brogden case. Henry Brogden was a trustee of several Wesleyan churches in the Altrincham circuit and of the one in Porthcawl. Like his father he remained an attached adherent of the Wesleyan denomination, and to the last was the steward of its church at Bowdon.

George William Hargreaves Brogden was the youngest of these Brogden brothers. He was a schoolboy when his father formed the family partnership, and he had not been included when his father died, nor when it was dissolved. The difference in age between him and his brothers resulted in his being ultimately more fortunate than they were. He had not taken part in the firm's early achievements nor in its initial success in South Wales; neither was he involved in the financial disaster his brothers suffered when the partnership became insolvent. His age prevented his participating in his brothers' early success; but it also excluded him from their ultimate failure.

Few facts can now be discovered with regard to the activities of this brother, other than that he described himself as a civil engineer, and that towards the end of his life, although he then lived in London, he was interested in coal mining in South Wales. He was a member of the South Wales Institute of Engineers in Cardiff and took part in a discussion on 'Damping Dust in Mines' in its meeting held on the 24th of November 1887. He was also connected with the joint-stock company known as the Bwllfa-Merthyr Dare Colliery Company, which was formed in November 1876 to purchase from John Brogden & Sons their leasehold Merthyr-Dare Colliery in Aberdare. In fact, in a meeting held at the pit-head of the colliery on the 17th April 1890, attended by about 700 of the colliers, he was presented with an illuminated address and was described as Mr. G. W. H. Brogden of Gresham House, London, the proprietor of the Bwllfa-Merthyr Dare Colliery. He died at his residence, 30 Montpelier Square, London, on the 7th of November 1892 leaving a widow and one son. Unlike his brothers, who had been partners in John Brogden & Sons, he died leaving a substantial personal estate.

In 1874, after his return from New Zealand, James Brogden married as his second wife Mary Caroline Beete, daughter of John Picton Beete,^{vi} a nephew of General Sir Thomas Picton. Since his brother Alexander had assumed control at Tondy, and the company he had formed in 1872 had taken over the undertakings of John Brogden & Sons in Mid-Glamorgan, James made his new home in Porthcawl and maintained contact with the activities of the partnership by visiting its offices in London. In December 1880, John Brogden & Sons having been dissolved in the July, Mrs. James Brogden purchased the 30 odd acres adjoining the new Porthcawl dock that her husband had bought for the company in January 1886, and by the end of the century, financed largely by mortgages, she had developed on the land the early stages of the modern town of Porthcawl. In 1906, however, the Great Western Railway Company that then owned the dock closed it, because its trade had been diverted to larger and more conveniently situated new docks at Port Talbot and Barry. Its closure threatened not only the continued development of her new town, but also her financial future. This added yet another to James's misfortunes, and undoubtedly hastened his death, which occurred soon afterwards. He died at his home, the Esplanade Hotel, on the 25th of January 1907, and was buried at Newton. James Brogden, who as a young man had laid the foundations of the family firm's early success in Mid-Glamorgan, was in some respects the most unfortunate of these Brogden brothers.

The collapse in the value of Mrs. Brogden's properties following the closure of the dock and the burden of her mortgages caused her financial position to deteriorate and her mortgagee to take steps to recover his capital. Many of her freeholds were sold to the lessees and the promenade, which she could no longer afford to maintain, was made over to the local council. In December 1907, Seabank House, her early Porthcawl home, and her land adjoining Mackworth Road were sold, and in June 1909 what remained of her freeholds and her un-developed land were also sold. The Esplanade Hotel, in which she and her husband had lived for some time, was ultimately disposed of, and Mrs. Brogden

moved to 72 Victoria Avenue, where she died on the 5th of September 1927. Her daughter Miss Lucy Eleanor Brogden, the last of this branch of the unfortunate family,^{vii} died in Rose Cottage, Philadelphia Road, Porthcawl on the 16th of February 1954.

The foregoing are the facts it has been possible to discover from the sources now available, and, while they do not provide adequate evidence upon which to base conclusions with regard to the causes that led to the misfortunes that befell his gifted but unfortunate family, they appear to justify the following observations.

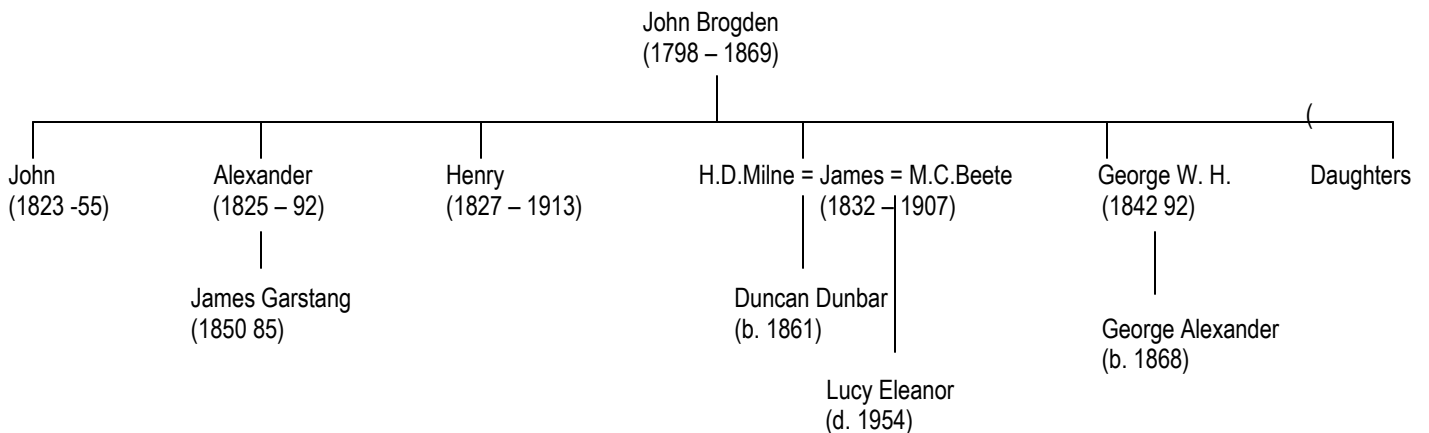
A decisive event in bringing about the financial downfall of these Brogden brothers was the failure of their attempt in 1872 to take over the iron industry in Mid-Glamorgan, since this resulted in the loss of their valuable undertakings in the area. Although the adverse trading conditions of the late 1870s played an important part in bringing about this failure, it can now be seen that it was a mistake to purchase the two ironworks in the Llymifi Valley, already in some difficulty, instead of deciding to concentrate upon the production of coal and to regard iron as of secondary importance. In fact, North's Navigation Collieries Ltd., which subsequently acquired the undertakings of the liquidated Brogden company, did this and prospered.

The Brogden plan to provide an outlet for their increasing output of coal by constructing a new dock at Porthcawl proved successful while the dock remained the only outlet from the Mid-Glamorgan industrial area. However, the subsequent development of branch railways from the Mid-Glamorgan valleys to the docks at Cardiff and the construction on the neighbouring coast of more accessible docks served by railways from these valleys provided ports to which the coal from the Mid-Glamorgan mines was diverted, with the result that Porthcawl dock lost its trade and was closed. The fact that their new dock became redundant in only forty years indicates a failure on the part of the Brogdens to foresee the limitations the disadvantages of its site would place upon its use by large ships and upon its success as a coal exporting port when it would have to compete with large, modern and easily accessible docks. Alexander Brogden, then the senior partner in John Brogden & Sons, must have played an important part in bringing about the construction of the new dock, because he was the chairman of the Ogmere Valley Railway Company and the vice—chairman of the Llymivi and Ogmere Railway Company, integral parts of the Brogden plan.

The unsatisfactory relationship that developed between Alexander and James - so evident in their correspondence and in the 1884 liquidation proceedings - resulted, after the father's death, in the partnership of the three brothers lacking the co-operation essential to the successful solution of its industrial and financial problems. The isolated position of James and the close association between Henry and his eldest brother resulted in the partnership becoming the will and dictates of the very forceful Alexander. In that position he promoted and developed successfully many important projects, but his stubborn self-confidence and his unwillingness to accept defeat were undoubtedly largely responsible for the failure of others.

The following facts appear to confirm the conclusion that personal qualities played a part in bringing about the misfortunes these Brogden brothers experienced. During the period 1873 to 1878, when the collapse of the South Wales iron trade and the fall in coal prices resulted in the liquidation of their Llymavi, Tondy and Ogmere Coal and Iron Company with the loss of their very valuable Mid-Glamorgan undertakings, and when the progressive deterioration in trading conditions caused the Great Western Railway Company to reduce its dividend from 6 1/4% to 3 3/4% John Brogden & Sons became involved in its dispute with the Metropolitan Railway Company and incurred the expense of ultimately taking the relatively unimportant case unsuccessfully to both the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords. On the other hand, during the following five years, 1879 to 1884, when trading conditions gradually improved and the Great Western Railway Company's dividend rose to 6 3/8%, a figure only exceeded once during the remainder of the century, John Brogden & Sons became insolvent and Alexander and Henry Brogden were involved in their sensational liquidations.

Finally, the Brogdens possessed to a high degree many of the qualities required for success during periods of economic expansion, but the number, size and variety of their undertakings and the speculative character of many of them meant that operating as a family partnership they were too fully committed financially to be able to survive during periods of severe recession in trade.



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This article is based upon information obtained from a variety of sources including the following:

- Documents, papers and correspondence at one time in the possession of a member of the family.
- Copies of schedules relating to the Brogden railway contracts in New Zealand and information concerning them obtained during his researches kindly provided by Mr. D.B. Leitch of Masterton, New Zealand, the author of *The Railways of New Zealand*.
- The Lancashire and Cheshire Record Offices, The Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society and the Barrow-in-Furness, Ulverston, Altrincham and Hale Libraries.
- The archives of the South Wales area of the National Coal Board, The Proceedings of The Institute of Civil Engineers, Vol. XV (1856), The Proceedings of the South Wales Institute of Engineers, The South Wales Coal Annual, Finlay A. Gibson, The coal mining industry of the United Kingdom, etc., 1874 - 1920 (1922), The Porthcawl dock shipping registers.
- Joseph Richardson, *Furness past and present* (2 vols. 1880), J. D. Marshall, *Furness and the industrial revolution* (1958), William White, *Furness folk and facts* (1930), D. B. Leitch, *The Railways of New Zealand* (1972).
- The Public Record Office, The General Registry and the Principal Probate Registry, Somerset House, The London Gazette and the Law Reports.
- The files of The Times, The Western Mail, The South Wales Daily News, The Glamorgan Gazette and The Porthcawl Advertiser.

LEONARD S. HIGGINS
Porthcawl

Footnotes

-
- ⁱ See a contribution on "The Late John Brogden" in Vol 1, pp 221 -35 of J. Richardson, *Furness past and present* (2 Vols. 1880)
- ⁱⁱ These purchases both involved mortgages and also subsequent very complicated financial arrangements.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The Anglicised spelling of Dyffryn and Llynfi is retained when the titles of Acts of Parliament and the names of companies in which it occurs are quoted.
- ^{iv} The existing railways in Mid-Glamorgan - the Llynvi Valley Railway and the South Wales Railway - were broad-gauge lines.
- ^v The new company formed by the Receiver also failed in 1885, and when the properties were later put up for auction by order of the court no buyer could be found. They were subsequently purchased by Colonel North and ultimately by North's Navigation Colliers (1889) Limited.
- ^{vi} In order to inherit the Picton estate he assumed the surname Picton by deed pole in 1883 and became John Picton Picton.
- ^{vii} Duncan Dunbar Brogden, James's son by his first wife, was gazetted 2nd Lieutenant on the 29th of July 1882 and was posted to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal West Sussex Regiment. After serving in Malta he proceeded to India in January 1886. It has not, however, been possible to discover when or where he died.**

** Subsequent research reveals that Duncan Dunbar Brogden died in Brighton in 1898 and that his wife and child predeceased him. See www.brogden.info for more details.
