

One hundred years ago, Isaiah Shorthose died. The name indicates the era and origin. The Old Testament prophet suggests Victorian religious seriousness. Shorthose, with and without "u" is a name that has flowed through the Derwent, Dove and Trent valleys for centuries. This short family history is forged, spun and weaved with the development of Belper, connected with the Strutts, Smedleys and Brettles works.

Isaiah did not know who his grandfather was and did not know his grandmother nor his own father. His father Thomas died when Isaiah was just 18 months old from heart disease in May 1846, at the age of 45. Thomas had been born to the unmarried 17 year old **Ann Shorthouse**. At the time, about one in twenty was born out of wedlock.

Ann, his grandmother, was baptized in 1784 at Saint Alkmund, Duffield, in the font which dates from c.1660. Her family originated Repton. Her father **John Shorthouse**, born in Derby, may have been drawn up the Derwent valley by the new mill in Belper in 1778.

The summer of 1783 would go down in history as the "sand summer". Large swaths of Europe were enveloped in a thick, permanent, haze as the Laki volcano erupted. Extremely hot summers and cold winters followed, causing crops to fail across Europe. The 19 year old John married the 26 year old local girl Mary Orme in Duffield in 10 November 1783. Ann was born 10 months later.

The original North Mill at Belper was completed by Jedediah Strutt when Ann was two. She never married nor had another child. From 17 to 24 October 1832, Princess Victoria stayed with the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth, and made many excursions in the neighbourhood, including a visit to Strutt's cotton mills at Belper. Six months later, Ann died at the age of 48.

Ann's son **Thomas** was born 1801. In many parts of England there were near famine conditions and food riots. Thomas had poor prospects : no father, no father's trade to learn, nor property.

In 1811, the population of Belper was just 1457. This was year of the Great Comet of which was visible to the naked eye for around 260 days from March.

As Belper grew there was a need for stone masons. By 1821, Belper had 129 houses, 1418 families, 3511 males, 3724 females, 176 freeholders, 65 families employed in agriculture, 1309 in trade or handicraft, 44 professional pursuits, nail making employed about "300-400 hands". The Manufactures were cotton, hosiery, pottery and nails. After his apprenticeship, Thomas became a journeyman stonemason. The rapidly industrialising cotton town Belper provided work, homes and protection from the Post Peninsula Wars Depression and agricultural crisis of 1816-7.

Thomas married 17 year old **Mary Birch** in 1823 at St Mary's Church, Crich, 13 miles from Belper. Mary, who was a Wesleyan, already had a daughter Thirza. When Thirza married in 1845, she named her father as William Watson, iron moulder, rather than her step father Thomas, with whom she was living with in 1841. In the 13 years during which Mary was married to Thomas before she died at the age of 30 in 1836, she had five children who survived. Her youngest son James, aged two, died very shortly after his mother.

Thomas joined the Belper Field Head Circuit of Primitive Methodists. The Primitive Methodist circuit in Derbyshire had started in 1816, spreading from North Staffordshire. On Sunday, March 4, 1838, he would have been at a fellowship meeting in the morning; "when the powers of darkness awfully opposed us. But in the Lovefeast, in the afternoon, the Lord, whom we sought, suddenly came to his temple; and in the course of the day about twenty souls were brought into liberty. Monday, March 5, was Quarter day. And at night, after two short sermons, we commenced a prayer meeting, and

eleven more professed to find the Lord... in this quarter,(there was) a clear increase of forty-two adults, besides forty-five children who meet in class," Methodism, masonry and marriage provided social structure.

Belper continued to prosper and grow. In 1838, George Stephenson directed the North Midland Railway through the town. It was also politically charged. The National Archives hold letters from the Magistrates of Belper, dated 30 March 1839, to Lord John Russell, Home Secretary, reporting the provision of Special Constables and a troop of lancers to deal with anticipated Chartist disturbances and that an ill feeling exists in the town between men employed on the North Midland Railway and workmen erecting the Poor Law Union Workhouse. The Chartist public meeting at Market-Place on 1 April promoted by the Working Men's Association passed peacefully.

By 1841, Belper had a population of 10,000. Thomas lived in the newly built Hopping Hill, with his sons aged 10 and 11 were already working as cotton carders.

In the same year, more than five years after the premature death of Mary, Thomas Shorthouse married **Elizabeth Williamson**, an illiterate daughter of a groom who was 8 years younger and was born 13 miles away in Ashbourne. The following year, William (named after his grandfather) was born and three years later **Isaiah**. At age 5, life was difficult for Isaiah and his widowed mother, who was living with her pauper groom father and 7 others at 22 Burkins Court. Within six years, his mother too has died, after 3 years of paralysis. At 12, Isaiah was orphaned, with no trade, no prospects.

In 1861, 15 year old Isaiah was working in the cotton mill, and living with his Aunt Mary, who was 20 years older than him, together with his older brother William Shorthouse and adult two cousins, who were labourers. In the same mill was a girl **Ann Watson**, three years older than Isaiah. She lived at 32 Long Row with her father John Watson, born 1813, a nailor then carter and her mother Mary. Brooks (born 1781). Mary's father Thomas Brooks had rented the house from the Strutts beforehand. His widow passed this highly desirable property to her three daughters, when she died in 1853. The three story terraced stone house still stands proudly, with a bright red front door.

In 1865, Ann, aged 23, has a daughter Mary Elizabeth with an unknown father. A year later Isaiah married her, and in 1870 the daughter was baptised as **Mary Elizabeth Shorthose**.

Mary went into service, in grand houses, starting with the George Strutt's family at Mackney House , Duffield. Between 1891 and 1901, she moved from Friar Gate to Backford Hall, just north of Chester. She became the Housekeeper and perhaps found a position for younger step sister in Moss Side. She married the Backford Hall Butler Mr Harding at the age of 53. They set up home in Lache with Saltney, just south of Chester, close to her married step sister.

Ann and Isaiah had six children in 11 years, and lived most of their married life at 18 Sort Row and then 32 Long Row. Ann died in 1904, aged 61. Isaiah moved from Strutts mill to Smedley's Iron foundry. He became an iron driller and filer at the Eagle Works. Smedleys manufactured Pan Grinding Mills. In 1911; Isaiah, 64, was a widowed Iron filer & store keeper, living on Matlock Lane with his youngest unmarried daughter Lillian, 33, a hosiery worker. Shortly afterwards he went to live with his eldest daughter **Susannah Clara** at 37 Mount Pleasant Saltney Chester. Isaiah died at 70 of chronic bronchitis & morbus cordis syncope (heart disease) on 24 September 1915. However he had seen his children prosper. The daughters were close, Mary with Susannah in Chester, Annie and Lily returning to Belper, sharing a home. He had seen his first son's son David win scholarships and graduate from Magdalen College Oxford .

The first son was **Thomas Brooks Shorthose** was born 1866. Brooks was the name of his maternal grandmother who was 50 when he was born and died six years later. It is unclear why he was

baptised aged 3.5 years old. By 1881, the family had moved to the 32 Long Row, where his mother had grown up. Thomas, like his father, had started working at Strutts as a “hand” and then become a technical craftsman. When 26, he married the dressmaker **Alice Neaum**, the daughter of the widow baker and Baptist **Mrs Sarah Ann Neaum**.

Thomas moved 22 miles south to Swadlincote and was employed as a potters mechanic at TG Greens, in Church Gresley. His son **David Neaum Shorthose** 1893-1955, won a Leicestershire, County Major Scholarship, and the Ash Exhibition to Magdalen College, Oxford. His Physics textbook, *Properties of Matter* was published by Heinman, which ran to several reprints.

Isaiah's second son Samuel, born 1869, also became an iron moulder and after getting married to local girl Martha Nightingale when they were 20-21 years old. They had 10 children and went to live in Burton on Trent. He died in 1917 having lost two sons in Great War.

The third son **Isaiah**, born 1873 also became an iron moulder, and remained in Belper until his death in 1944. He married Margaret Taylor of 52 Hopping Hill, Belper, who was living with widowed labourer father and worked as a hosiery embroider. They had a daughter **Grace Lilian** who remained in Belper until her death in 1980.

The eldest daughter, **Susannah Clara**, born 1871, went into service. In 1891, she was a scullery maid in house of Henry Cook, Stockbroker, Moss Side, Lancashire. In 1899, aged 28 she married a local Butchers Manager, 7 years her junior. They set up home at 37 Mount Pleasant Saltney Chester

The second daughter **Annie**, born 1875, became a cook in Northumberland and Warwickshire and returned to Belper, died in 1951 at 33 Mill Street Belper.

The youngest daughter, **Lillian** born 1877, became Hosiery Warehouse forewoman at Brettles. As the youngest unmarried daughter she stayed after home and looked after her father after her mother died in 1904. Lilly lived until 1948, 71, bed ridden suffering from severe arthritis of the hands, living at 33 Mill Street Belper with her elder sister.

For five generations, the Shorthoses of Belper have been born and lived with conservative industrious respectability of Methodism within twenty miles of the town. Generally they ventured away only for military service for the men or domestic service or the Lancashire mills for the single women.