

The 71st Richard Gardner Williams Commemoration Banquet was held on 28th February 2018 in Apothecaries' Hall. Past Master John Bridgeman gave the Sentiment to celebrate the life and generosity of the principal benefactor of the Turners' Company.

There can be no misgivings about talking yet again about the generous legacy of such an interesting late member of our Company – it is a rich seam which will be mined endlessly.

In this digital age we have an image of Richard's Probate Registration – leaving some £43,400 to the Public Trustee and ultimately to the Turners Company. However one's legacy is about much more than the money one leaves, it's also about the values and memories one leaves and passes on; it's about what's left of you when all your money has been spent.

And thus we should reflect on Richard Williams – a man with no children, only a few in his immediate family but a man who evokes many memories.

His values were such that his legacy fully provided for the lifetimes of his dear wife Edith Ellen and his unmarried sister Martha Anne.

He made provisions for his home Church of Great Barrow in Cheshire and the substantial residue he left to his Livery Company which he had clearly come to trust. A trust was in no way misplaced since, under the direction of the Court, the Turners' Company has not only preserved its benefactor's capital in its entirety it has grown it 100 fold!

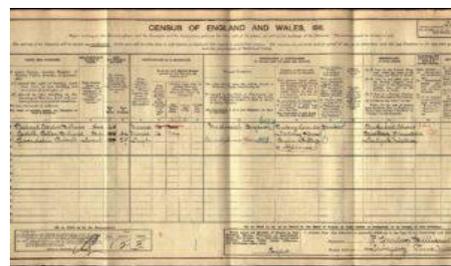
WILLIAMS Richard Gardner of 10 St. Marks-square Regents Park **Middlesex** died 18 February 1931 at Howden Court Hotel Croft-road Torquay Probate **London** 24 March to The Public Trustee. Effects £49420 14s. 6d. Resworn £49402 9s. 8d.

Unknowingly Richard Gardner Williams has also left us with a considerable digital legacy, digital footprints giving us glimpses of his life.

For the first time in history, half the world's population can communicate with each other. Over 3 billion people can learn about the life and legacy of Richard Gardner Williams. It is available through the rich collection of material such as the 1899 photograph above, and all that Turners have written and will continue to write about him.

Not only do we have this image of Richard Gardener Williams. We know from those who knew him that he "had reddish hair, healthy complexion and a slim build.... He was an enthusiastic patron of the theatre.... an avid reader of good literature and inclined to pity those who were not; and he was a likeable and agreeable companion and a good salesman".

The 1911 Census



From the 1911 Census Return, which most people filled in themselves, we can also see Richard's handwriting that at the age of 45, his address has become a fine house in affluent Pinner, and that for 16 years he had been married to his wife Edith Ellen,

born in Westbury on Severn, and then aged 36.

This suggests that Edith Ellen was 20 and Richard was 29 when they married around 1895. Here the Richard Gardner Williams digital legacy become intriguing.

Where was he married.....?



For the first time, here it is: 6th March 1895. Richard Gardner Williams, an Engineer, living at 46, Tarvin Road, Chester (his parents address) and the son of Thomas Williams, an Accountant (we knew that).

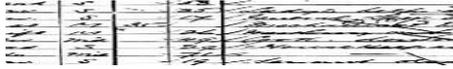
The mystery of Edith "Helen" Harrison

He married Edith "Helen" Harrison, of Ivy Cottage, Freehold, Llandaff and daughter of Charles Harrison, Farmer. The certificate is written out and not signed – and the wedding took place in Llandaff Cathedral.

This is particularly interesting to me, as my school had many associations with Llandaff Cathedral. I know of The Freehold, the name of a residential part of Llandaff North on the outskirts of Cardiff. It adjoins the parish of Whitchurch, formerly just outside Cardiff, where I was born and brought up.

Ivy Cottage used to be the Coachman's House of nearby Wingfield House: what was Edith Harrison doing there and why? A Cathedral wedding is quite special – and rather expensive. So who exactly was Edith Harrison and

how did Richard Williams meet her?

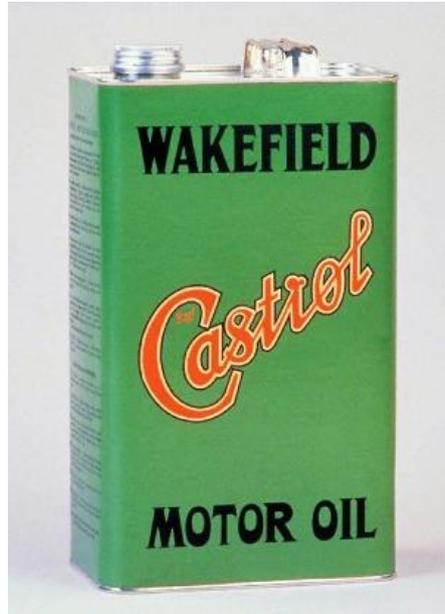


In the 1901 Census we find Richard and Edith Williams living at 3 Argyll Mansions in Willesden, Middlesex.

Richard, an Engineer, gives his place of birth as Birkenhead while Edith was born in Westbury-on-Severn, Gloucestershire – the same as later reported in the 1911 Census. But there is no record of an Edith Harrison, daughter of Charles, in the 1891 or 1881 Censuses and no record of an Edith Harrison born in Westbury-on-Severn anywhere in the 1870's. Edith Harrison and her father – Charles Harrison, a Farmer, are for the time being an enigma. No matter – someone somewhere will one day find out more.

The Wakefield Oil company

It is well written up in the Company's history that from 1890 to 1899 Richard Gardner Williams worked at the Vacuum Oil Company for Charles Wakefield (a member of the Turner's and Haberdashers' Companies and famously Lord Mayor of London in 1915). In 1899 Wakefield moved to London and founded – with Richard Williams and with seven others - the business of Messrs C C Wakefield & Company. Their reputation was in lubricants.



The Wakefield name became less and less significant with the passing of time and the Company was eventually renamed Castrol reflecting the incorporation of vegetable Castor Oil in its formulations.

Castrol was eventually acquired by Burmah Oil – in turn acquired by BP - but Castrol Oils continue to dominate the world of specialist lubrication today - from F1 cars to the Mars Explorer and for Rolls Royce Aero Engines.

The father of Richard Gardner Williams

Richard Williams father, Thomas, died on 4th October 1904. Details of the Williams ancestry in Cheshire are well reported in our published history.

† Glamorganshire died 30 Septembe
ter died 4 October 1904 Probate CI
near Ebbw Vale £10714 3s. 7d.

What has not been known until now is the size of Thomas Williams's estate. £10,714 in 1904 would probably be worth about £2 million now, probably £40,000 in 1935 and some £3 million today if invested in prime London real estate.

Our Official Company Historians had no access to Richard Gardner Williams' digital legacy and report that he joined the Turners' Company in January 1913 and retired from Messrs C C Wakefield and Company in 1930 but as Past Master Peter Gibson discovered this is not the case.

Joining the Institute of Mechanical Engineers

The digital archive of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers has published applications for professional membership from 1847 to 1930. In March 1917 Richard applied for membership of the Institute after 4 years and 3 months as Managing Director of the Lea Valley Engineering Company, Waltham Cross – Essex. He must have left Messrs C C Wakefield by the end of 1913.

The Institute of Mechanical Engineers citation shows that the Lea Valley Engineering Company were refrigeration specialists. Domestic refrigerators had not yet arrived in 1912 Britain but commercial and industrial refrigeration was booming. A good business to be in. And clearly one of the projects of which Richard Gardner Williams was proud was the Steam Yacht "Endurance".

Shackleton's 'Endurance' expedition



Fitted out in early 1914 the Sir Ernest Shackleton set sail for Antarctica in the "Endurance" as

WWI was brewing on 6 August 1914. It was probably the strongest wooden ship ever built. The King saw the Shackleton expedition as a great force for good in the face of the possibilities of war and gave great encouragement.

*As years go by, till we are old,
This tale will yet again be told,
A tale related loud and oft
In accents awed, sublime and soft...*

Tragically the “Endurance” became trapped in pack ice, its hull was broken in October 1915, it sank in November. It was April 1916 before the last of its brave crew were heroically rescued. Richard must have had amazing tales to share with his new found members of the Company in 1917.

*So master if thy will it be
Let us stand and we shall see
Each other’s joy and gratitude
For riches to us all endued,
By one who spreads our bread
with Jam*

A town house in Regents Park

Richard - In Piam Memoriam



Eventually Richard moved into a Town House in Regent’s Park. Then, as now, a fine place to live in London. The property is worth over £3 million today.

What an amazing man. We learn so much more about him every year. He must have been full of fascinating stories.

And he was kind, thoughtful and generous so in the words of the late Alan Fagg, Past Master and formerly both Chaplain to and Father of the Company.