



POORES OF ACTON
THE STORY OF A BUSINESS

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POORES OF ACTON

EARLY DAYS

Thomas Poore came from one of the villages around Faringdon, Berkshire where there were a great many Thomas and Timothy Poores in the eighteenth century. They were mainly farm workers or had smallholdings.

After the Napoleonic Wars agriculture motioned to decline, partly because of the weather, the great debts incurred during the wars and the Corn Laws. Many farm workers left the land to seek work elsewhere, often in London. Among these were Thomas Poore, whom we first find being married to Maria Tidbury at St Martins in the Fields on January 1st 1821. Maria was born in Shrivenham, another of the villages in the Faringdon area Her father, too, had come to London. He died in Teddington. Thomas and Marla were then about 30 years of age.

By 1841 Thomas and Maria had moved to a small house in Turnham Green at Gunnersbury Place on the south side of the Chiswick High Road near Surrey Crescent. The Chiswick Flyover has taken its place. In the Census of that year Thomas is described as a “broker”. The word has many connotations. Perhaps his proximity to Brentford Market and knowledge of the Lobjoits (well-known Chiswick market gardeners) may give a clue.

Thomas and Maria Poore had two children, George, b. 1833 and Timothy, b. 1837, both in Chiswick. There appears to have been a girl also (Ann?).

Thomas Poore died in 1843 and was buried in St Nicholas churchyard, Chiswick. Maria continued to live in the house and in the 1851 Census is described as a “laundress”.

This is another ambiguous term. It still meant “land-lady”. There was a large laundry, Camille Simon’s, just around the corner but it is more likely that she took in washing She had, in any case, four lodgers, an attorney, a gardener, a coal merchant’s labourer and a plasterer’s son.

The boys were now 18 and 13. There was in 1851 no sign of the girl. The boys are described as “sons of laundress”. No occupation is given. George, according to family tradition, became a seaman and died abroad.

At an early age, possibly 13 years, Timothy was placed in an apprenticeship at a musical smith’s in Soho, near Piccadilly, making accordions. He always said that this was where he first learned to use a lathe. He walked to and from work. In old age he used to describe the walk vividly. Fortunately this did not last for long as he soon found an apprenticeship almost on his doorstep with Thomas Moses Lobjoit.

The Lobjoit family were descended from the Huguenots who arrived in England after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. By 1811 this branch of the family had come to Turnham Green where Thomas Lobjoit, senior, was born. He

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became a gardener at Gunnersbury. There were two sons, William John, who became a successful market gardener with a great deal of land in Putney and Wandsworth and flourishing outlets at Covent Garden and Brentford. The second son, Thomas Moses, became a smith, both a blacksmith and a whitesmith; although he liked to describe himself as a “master ironmonger”. His premises were in Albert Place in the Chiswick High Road, just across Packhorse Lane (now Acton Lane) from the “Packhorse Inn”. His forge is marked there on early maps. Thomas Moses’s son Henry was a fellow apprentice with Timothy as whitesmith and possibly William’s son Thomas also, who went on to build boats at Strand on the Green.

By 1858 Timothy would be out of his apprenticeship. At the same time around this date his mother died and he went into lodgings. In the 1861 Census he is boarding at 16 Devonshire Terrace, a little road between Devonshire Road and Dukes Avenue (now gone). Here Charles Telling kept a grocer’s shop, although he was by trade a cooper. His daughter Mary Ann Telling was then 21.

Thomas Lobjoit had a shop in the High Road just around the corner from Devonshire Road. It seems likely that this is where Timothy worked Timothy Poore and Mary Ann Telling were married by the Revd E. W. Belton of St Mary’s, Eating on January 6th 1862. They continued to live in Turnham Green, perhaps over the shop. Emily, their first child, was born there on January 6th 1863.

Although Thomas Moses Lobjoit’s main premises were just in Chiswick he considered himself an Acton man, worshipped at St Mary’s, Acton and was a vestry man there. He had land in South Acton and was an Overseer of the Poor in 1853. In 1860, after the Enclosure of the Common Fields made land available for building, Acton began to grow. Church Road was developed by the British Land Company as part of its Mill Hill Estate. There was building by 1864.

Thomas Lobjoit took the opportunity to open a business there and placed Timothy Poore in charge. He was there before November 1864, since Charles Thomas was born on the 29th of that month. Charles was baptised in the old St Mary’s Church (on January 8th 1865). The church was pulled down for rebuilding in March. No doubt the family lived over the premises in Church Road. Timothy was sent a young apprentice whitesmith of Lobjoit’s called John Rolfe, then aged 14. Rolfe was to stay with Poores for 53 years. In 1865 on the baptism record, Timothy described himself as a zinc worker.

T. POORE OF KING STREET, ACTON

Having settled in Acton, Timothy Poore lost no chance of looking out for a place of his own. By 1865, premises became available next to the “King’s Head” in King

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Street, still called Back Lane by the locals. Legally, it was 241a High Street, but it was known also as No. 1 King Street.

The house and shop had been built by a Mr Hinge, who having invested in the "King's Head" wanted to keep an eye on it, although he had leased it to the Thompson family, the forerunners of Fullers Brewery. He left there in 1819 and let the premises to a succession of tenants, some of whom were blacksmiths. The previous occupant, before Timothy Poore was Thomas Jones, a blacksmith and farrier. No records survive of the transactions. We only know that Timothy went there in 1865 from advertisements he inserted in the Acton Gazette in the 1880s and 1890's in which he announces that he began his business in King Street in 1865. It is unlikely that he brought the goodwill of Jones' business since he never acted as a farrier.

Next door at number 3 King Street there was another blacksmith and farrier. In 1865 this was Thomas Smith who had been apprenticed to his father, Joseph, and had taken over the business when his father retired in 1858. He had been successful in building it up and when Timothy arrived at number 1, was employing six men and a number of apprentices.

Poore and Smith seem to have worked in harmony. Whether by spoken or tacit agreement they developed their business on different lines. Thomas Smith was the elder and well established. He continued to shoe horses and make ironwork, proceeding to coach building. He married Miss Holford, the daughter of the landlord of the King's Head and took her young brother H J. Holford to be an apprentice. No. 3 became a centre for making country carts for farmers and smart landau-barouches for the gentry. In 1881 he passed the business on to H. J. Holford whose son H. Holford succeeded in 1900. He was superintendent of the Fire Brigade and a Baptist deacon, retiring in 1925 and selling the property.

The development of Timothy Poores business can be traced from the ways he described himself at various times. His 1860s billheads say "Gas and Hot Water Engineer, Locksmith, Bell Hanger and Gas Fitter". In 1869 he does describe himself in the baptism register as "General Smith", but in the directories he is "Gas Finner & Hot Water Engineer" (1872) adding "Brazier & Lacquerer" in 1873. In 1881 he calls himself a "master whitesmith" and in 1887 a plumber. On the board above his shop he has all of these but the ones that stand out are "Plumber & Hot Water Engineer". These were skills he acquired among others from Lobjoit The Brentford Gas Company was set up in 1822. Much of their work was contracted out and Lobjoit appears to have taken some share in it.

No. 1 King Street was both family house and a shop. The coach entrance in the centre had a bay window over it. On the left was the shop window with small panes; the shop itself being entered from the archway. On the right was the front door to the living accommodation. Behind was a workshop, forge and stable.

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Here the Poores had the rest of their family; Elizabeth Amelia (1866), Annie Marie (1869), Mary Lydia (1871), Timothy (1878), Edward Augustus (1880), William Telling (1883).

In 1872 Fullers Brewery acquired the freehold of the Kings Head and No. 1 King Street with it. They leased it in 1873 to the Trustees of a marriage settlement made between G.R. and Sophia Hebden. This did not affect Timothy's lease. In 1878 Charles Thomas Poore, now aged 13, started as an apprentice in the business.

THE MOVE TO HIGH STREET

In the latter part of the 1880s there were discussions in the Acton Local Board about the necessity of widening the High Street. It was a long drawn out business involving an enquiry by the Local Government Board and eventually after a decision by them, a confirmatory Act of Parliament. This took until 1892, when the Act was passed. While all of this was going on Timothy and Charles Thomas Poore, now in partnership, took a lease of 214a High Street (No. 1 King Street) for thirty years at 30 per annum rent. In the same year they took a lease of 204 High Street, on the Mount, also for 30 years. Of St Mary's Mount only the town square now remains in front of the church. In the 1880s there were thirteen or fourteen shops including Acton Invalid Kitchen run by the Parish Church. There was a raised pavement in front of them along the High Street. Hence "the Mount". Poores took the shop formerly in the occupation of Frauds Evans Banks, pianoforte dealer. The freehold belonged to The Williamson Trust whose representative was George Harper. It was next door to the Invalid Kitchen. Here the Poores carried on the business of locksmith, general ironmonger, tool and household merchants. Two of Timothy's daughters worked there.

It was in 1892 that Timothy Poore, Junior, having reached 14 years of age was apprenticed to the firm but he left after some years to go to South America.

The plans of the Local Board finally came to fruition with the passing of the 1892 Act. In 1893, they arranged with the brewers for the old "King's Head" to be demolished so that new premises should be built some sixteen feet farther back from its old frontage on the High Street and back from King Street also. To compensate the brewers for the reduction of their site area, the Board gave them the ground on which No. 1 King Street stood, having acquired the freehold and recompensed Timothy Poore with £1,150 for the lease. They decided to clear the Mount also so as to widen the road there and for No. 204, Poores received £350.

Meanwhile, new premises were required for Poores. They were able to acquire the lease of 232 High Street, just around the corner on the other side of the King's Head from Henry Tufts. It was a site that went back a long way. The shop was in

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front with residential accommodation over and there was plenty of room behind for workshops and stabling.

Having arrived at 1895, we can look back at the great changes that had come over Acton since Timothy Poore had come out of his apprenticeship in 1858, changes in which the Poores had played a large part. In 1858 Acton was still an agricultural village, surrounded on all sides by fields. There were four Common Fields farmed in strips, with larger farms on both sides of Horn Lane and at East Acton. Down towards Chiswick there were market gardens, orchards and watercress beds. Timothy loved the countryside and walked in it when he could.

He became an expert on grain and farmers bowed to his opinion. Is this something he learned from his father? He especially liked to walk on the Elms Estate in West Acton, still called "Squire Weggs", although Samuel Wegg died in 1805 and his daughter Elizabeth in 1842.

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With the Enclosure Act of 1859, those who had strips in the Common Fields were able to exchange them for an equivalent area in one piece. This released sites for building which began in Turnham Field and Church Field in 1860. Within twenty years the greater part of South Acton and the Churchfield area were built up. The South Field soon followed. In 1895 Timothy Poores beloved Wegg Estate, over which he had walked and shot was being offered as building plots, as well as the Springfield estate, once a farm. The population rose from 2,582 to 24,206 in 1891. Schools and churches were built. Water and gas came with the first building, drainage became a problem. Here was vast scope for an enterprising young man like Timothy Poore.

He was a worker-manager of the old school. He had received little formal education: like his father he could not write his name at his marriage, but he clearly learned a great deal from Thomas Lobjoit. He could turn his hand to anything in the building, plumbing, engineering line. He reminds us of those figures in the Industrial Revolution in the North and Midlands who worked alongside their men. His sons had to go through the same process, starting as helpers, then apprentices. William Telling Poore started, aged 12, at 2/6 a week in 1897. The daughters worked in the shop. Maria, his wife kept the books in the early days.

THE GROWTH OF THE BUSINESS

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We do not know very much about Timothy Poore's work in the first twenty years. We do know that he went about Acton seeking out work from the builders of new houses. It is likely that some of his friends on the Acton Board gave him information. Some of the invoices still survive for work which he did at the Rothschilds' house in Gunnersbury Park, particularly from Baron Lionel (d 1879) and the Baroness (d 1889). In addition to being called in for repairs and replacements, Poores had a contract to overhaul the kitchen and its utensils once a year, another to keep the heating and lighting in repair and yet another to set out lights in the Japanese garden every Christmas. The Baroness's benefactions to Acton were frequent, helping to build schools and the Working Men's Club in the Steyne. Poores came to share in the work. No doubt her patronage attracted other customers.

One invoice survives from 1870. It details work done over a period for Mr Richards of "Shalimar", a large villa with extensive grounds on the west side of Horn Lane. It gives a good idea of the variety of his work at that time for households.

"Grinding in plugs of two Beer Taps	1s. 0d.
Repairing Water Cans with new bottom	1s.3d..
Making New Iron wrench for Unions	1s. 6d
Making a joint to match pipes	6d.
Picking door lock at house in Mill Hill and refitting with new key	2s. 6d.
Taking down and cleaning 2 gas Chandeliers".	

In addition he replaced curtain rods, saucepans and a kitchen range, supplied glass shades to lamps, rebuilt or replaced locks and gates. One of the most detailed entries concerns the rebuilding of a perambulator for the family, presumably one with sentimental value. When he had finished only one side of the original seems to have remained!

Another place in which his work is recorded is the Minutes of the Acton Charities Trustees which gives work done by Poores in the Almshouses, particularly to the fire places and stoves which often seemed to give trouble. The Minutes of the Acton Board and School Board also contained reference to his being asked to carry out repairs.

The survival of his 1895 Ledger, which for certain contracts and accounts goes on to 1914, gives us the clearest idea of the variety and spread of work that Timothy Poore undertook. Walking down the High Street, there is hardly a shop or premises which did not have an account in 1895 to supply equipment or carry out

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repairs. There are indeed about 300 customers with accounts. All the important people and the bigger houses are there, from the Rector to Mr Amherst of Suffolk House who is described by one of Poores workmen. "Every day Mr Amherst would leave his house in a coach with footmen in full regalia on his way to the Stock Exchange". Actually, Mr Amherst was a pawn broker! Many of these had been in Acton for some time so were no doubt old customers.

Among the institutions he served were the school managers of St Mary's and St Dunstan's Schools, the Acton School Board (for All Saints and the Priory Schools) the Parish Church, Springfield College, several cricket dubs, the Young Women's Institute, the Working Men's Club and the Great Western Railway who had a station in Acton. There is one fascinating entry. The Acton Technical Education Committee set up a cookery centre in the Priory Schools - a great innovation. Poores supplied the full equipment - but only one of each utensil. Clearly the girls had to watch! In 1903 Poores received the contract for painting the Fire Station.

There were the laundries. From 1860 the British Land Company sold plots in South Acton to builders who put up small houses, with a sixteen foot frontage but surprisingly long gardens. They were quickly filled by farm workers and labourers from all over the country. To raise the rent they took in lodgers; their wives took in washing. The washerwomen were speedily supplanted by families who ran professional hand laundries using the local women as their labour force. Their customers were to be found in the growing middle class districts around Acton, in Chiswick and Haling, as well as the easily reached Kensington, Mayfair and West End areas. By 1895 there were over 212 laundries. This was the industrial base from which Acton's prosperity began.

Poores supplied some of the small needs of the growing numbers of hand laundries. One large laundry, Rush's in The Steyne, went over to steam as early as 1870, but mechanisation came very slowly to the others, a few between 1880 and 1895. Poores supplied Rush's with parts but they had their own engineer. By 1895 Poores were doing repairs to ten laundries which had some form of power. This type of work was to grow particularly after the First World War and included the installation of boilers, both steam and gas.

Another area of business lay with the Grand Junction Water Company. First supplying water to Paddington from the canal in 1811 they moved to water from the Thames at Chelsea in 1820 and then to the Thames at Brentford in 1835, each time seeking purer water. By an Act of 1852 they were forced to take water from above Teddington Lock which they piped back to Brentford. From there they began to supply water to Acton in 1861. Timothy Poore laid pipes for them soon after he arrived in Acton and went on to repair mains and drains for many years. The accounts are in the ledgers.

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An even larger part of Poores' work was with the Brentford Gas Company, We have the accounts only from 1895 to 1917 but it is clear they had been doing this for some years. Gas was first laid in Acton in 1853, but until 1863 only supplied to a few private customers. It is interesting to note that the negotiations by the Acton improvement Committee were conducted by "Mr Lobjoit", presumably because of his previous experience with installing gas in Chiswick.

Poores work at first consisted mainly of laying gas mains, repairing pipes and dealing with leakages, painting lamp posts, repairing trenches and putting in meters as well as building meter pits. Poores was one of the first contractors for the putting in of penny-in-the-slot meters.

Payments from the Brentford Gas Company increased over the years:

1895	£1,105
1907	£1,860
1914	£2,711

With the rapid increase in the building of houses, contractors came to Poores for the "carcassing" of the houses, the laying of pipes once the walls and joists were set up. Timothy Poore is said to have found a lot of this work for himself, making approaches when he heard of houses to be built. As well as in Acton, carcassing was done in Twickenham, Baling, Chiswick, Hanwell, Cranford, Feltham, Isleworth, Whitton and Harrow. A worker was paid 5s. 2d. a house. In 1897 the best made £2. 14s. 6d. a week. The charge to the builder was £3 6s. 8d., the set of fittings costing 1s. 1d.

The number of workers in the 1890's employed by Poores varied according to the time of the year, some of the work being seasonal. In May 1897 there were 23; in July, 32; in February 1898, 32; and in May, 43.

The profitability of the business is difficult to estimate. However, there are some indications. In 1895, the amount due in the Ledger from private customers was in the region of £1,000. There was another £214 from "petty accounts", and probably this total figure could be doubled from the shops and other business, without including receipts from the Gas and Water Companies. The wages account for the years 1901-1908 stay around £2,600 to £2,800, reached £4,000 in 1911 and almost £5,000 in 1913. inflation was not great in this period so these figures show an increase in workers and therefore of trade.

Some of this follows the setting up of a partnership between Timothy Poore and Charles Thomas Poore in 1897. It was now "Poore & Son". In 1901 the business was still further expanded by the taking over the shop and premises next door (230 High Street). After the rebuilding of the "King's Head", part of the premises almost on the old site of No. 1 King Street was taken as an additional shop for

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some years. Here a wallpaper department was set up The effect of these additional premises is shown in the increase of takings in the shops:

1901	£1,167
1913	£2,416

There was also a great increase in the carcassing work, over a radius of 25 miles, from Edgware to Shepherds Bush to Staines.

THE PARK ROYAL SHOW

In 1900 the Royal Agricultural Society of England, which held its annual show in different parts of the country (Kilburn in 1879!) considered a permanent site near London would be an advantage, largely because the railways led there. Accordingly, they leased from the Lambert Brothers a thousand acres in the fields near Twyford Abbey at a cost of £26,146, with an annual rental of £1,000. To administer the show they set up "Park Royal Ltd", in honour of the new king, Edward VII. The name stuck and we call the area, now largely factories, "Park Royal", to this day.

Two grand entrances were built in Abbey Road, the site fenced, a show ring, offices, stables, exhibition stands, and a pub erected The GWR opened a special station and ran sidings into the ground.

Poores were involved in some of the building, especially the stands and in the laying of drainage, for which Acton claimed the Sewage Rate, The Company's ledgers show payments of £374 10s. 0d, £160 10s. 0d and £2 6s. 0d to Poores but they received also some part of the payment for roads, sewers and drain pipes which amounted to £3,308 19s. 0d. The show opened on June 3rd 1903. It was quite successful. The 1904 show had less visitors, but at the show Poores & Sons had a stand. Their entry in the catalogue for 1904 reads:

"Machines for Grinding & Sharpening Lawn Mowers: Collection of Garden Implements: Household Requisites: ironmongery & Sanitary Goods, Prices at Stands."

By 1905, they had discovered that farmers buy articles with the word "Agricultural" attached, as every "agricultural vet" knows. So their Catalogue then read:

"Agricultural Tools, Agricultural Portable Coppers, Agricultural Stoves and Ranges, Agricultural Hose & Fittings Agricultural Estate Locks & Ironmongery, Agricultural Cutlery & Edge Tools, Collection of. Prices at Stands."

Let us hope stall 255 did better business in 1905. The goods were the same. Whether they did or not, Poores became known much more widely.

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The farmers and livestock went to the 1905 show but not the general public. The 1903 attendance of 65,000 fell to 24,000 in 1905. The RASE decided to close the site down, Park Royal Ltd went into liquidation and the Royal Show went on its travels again. The Show Ring was left and was used for some years by Queens Park Rangers Football Club, who had their laundry washed in Acton as a result.

Poores work at the show was superintended by W. T. Poore, who like other officials had to wear morning dress for the visits of Edward VII and the Prince of Wales.

FROM PARK ROYAL TO THE GREAT WAR

While this was going on, there was a different kind of "show" in the Far East - the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. Poores received an order for a number of enormous iron bolts, apparently for gun carriages. They measured twelve feet by 1' 14 inches. The thread was put on them by the Helical Locknut Patent Co Ltd which had its offices in Samuel Wegg's old house, "The Elms", site of Timothy Poores former shooting. The engineering and toy-making firms which occupied this site from 1893 to 1952 were all good customers of Poores. In 1910 it became possible to take over the lease of 234 High Street so that Poores now occupied the whole block of three eighteenth century houses. One of the results of this acquisition was that all the surviving documents relating to these houses passed into Poores keeping and so preserve the evidence for an important part of Acton's history. The story is told elsewhere: here a brief summary suffices. In 1638 there stood on this site a tenement called the Blew House". By 1768 it has passed to Thomas Knowlton who demolished it and erected three houses. He could not meet the mortgage he took out to pay for the buildings so the houses were put up for sale together with a plot of land at the west end. This plot went to Samuel Wegg to add to Bank House, the houses to Thomas Sutton.

The history of each house is known in detail. It is possible to reconstruct what they looked like when built and to follow the later alterations and additions. Their long gardens allowed for additional storage and workshops. The interior retained, particularly on the first floor, some eighteenth century fire surrounds and beautiful corniced doorways.

Electricity came to Acton in 1905 with the setting up of the District Council's generating station in Wells Farm Road, the Metropolitan Electricity Supply Company taking over in 1911.

This involved Poores in a new venture, converting houses from gas to electricity and installing electrical systems in new houses. This was a continuing and profitable business which included wiring St Gabriel's Church (1931); St Francis, Osterley (1933) and the Chertsey Bridge.

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THE FIRST WORLD WAR 1914-1918

During this period the Park Royal site came into its own again. Munitions factories were built on its edges. The show area became an assembly and despatch point for Army Transport, including thousands of horses. War Office contracts were undertaken by Poores who came to be relied on in an emergency when unexpected numbers of men and horses arrived, both of them needing food and other necessities. The old GWR sidings came into use once again.

Poores also erected anti-aircraft guns and searchlight stations, e.g. on Horsenden Hill and a three gun site where the Western Avenue meets Old Oak Common Lane, as well as a site where Lowfield Road stands.

When the war was over the factory sites were sold, and there took place a gradual industrialisation of the area. Poores were again called upon to supply tools and other equipment for buildings and factories. This contract was never lost. They are still in touch with many firms at Park Royal Enterprise Trust.

In 1921 W. T. Poore was taken into partnership. He it was who had been responsible for a great deal of the Park Royal work during the war.

POORES IN THE ACTON COMMUNITY

The family played little direct part in the new forms of Local Government, the Acton Board 1865-94, the Urban District Council (to 1921), the Borough Council (from 1921) but a great deal with the Community itself. This is seen particularly in the growth of the Fire Brigade. Increasing numbers of fires in the early 60's led to concern in the parish. Eventually the Board provided a fire engine, while public subscription provided uniforms. It was a volunteer brigade in which the Poore family played a large part between 1867 and 1924. Timothy Poore served for 30 years, C.T. Poore for 31 and W.T. Poore for 22 years. Their collection of memorabilia is mainly now with the London Fire Brigade.

It was an exhausting piece of service. Calls went to the police station, a boy ran to warn the stables and collect the firemen. It took twenty to thirty minutes. Someone had to go to Kew on horseback to warn the Water Company to make sure of the pressure. By 1899 there were electric bells in the volunteers' houses but the number of fires increased greatly.

For a long time the fire brigade was rather like a social club. It had its own cricket team. There is a delightful picture of Timothy Poore looking like W.G. Grace with his beard, wearing his fire brigade pill box cap while waiting to bat, with his son (W.T. Poore) on his knee.

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After Timothy's death one aspect of his life came to light. After a fire at the house of a poor family, he would start a subscription list. When the old fire engine was trundled out for Hospital Day, there was Timothy collecting at its side. He was a founder member of the Philanthropic Society and a lifelong supporter of many Acton charities.

THE FIRST TOWN SHOPPING CENTRE IN ACTON

Life after the war changed a great deal. Acton received its Charter in 1921 with F.A Baldwin a former proprietor of The Empire Laundry, as its Charter Mayor. There was now a growing confidence and prosperity in the town. Its factories in the Vale had done well in the war and new factories were beginning to develop in Park Royal. The laundries were fewer in number but larger and increasingly mechanised. It is in this atmosphere that C. T. and W.T. Poore set about developing a nearby area of Acton to serve "not only the population of 63,000 people in the Borough itself, but the communities of adjoining districts from which are drawn daily some thousands of workers for Acton's varied industries".

On the south side of the Uxbridge Road opposite Poores there were three late eighteenth century houses, Woodlands, Woodland Cottage and The Oaks. In 1903 the whole area was bought by the District Council to build a county secondary school at the south end of the gardens and to lay out part of them as a public park - The Woodlands.

A Methodist Church and a row of shops was built along the High Street frontage. A new road, called Crown Street, was cut through from the High Street to Park Road North forming another link with South Acton. Large Areas of waste land were left on either side of this new road which had no houses or shops. For some time the Council had its yard on the west side.

In October 1921 Poores bought 171 ft frontage on the west side and in January 1922 125 feet frontage on the east side and erected huts from the war to serve as shops. In March 1926 they added 129 feet frontage at the south end of the east side. They also bought a small piece at the end of Mill Hill Terrace which abutted on the site, which they were able to use as a builder's yard. They had now acquired all the waste land on either side of Crown Street.

On the east side a covered market was built which was opened on 2nd February 1928. In their own words.

"The new Covered Market is the heart of the Town, opposite St Mary's Church and is easily accessible by tram, bus and train services. Built of steel with reinforced concrete floors, there is floor space for stalls, lock-up shops, garage and floor accommodation for tenants amounting to 32,000 square feet. An

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interesting feature is that the interior of the market is laid out on the American principle of the open centre for stalls and a surround of shops. There are four entrances and wide gangways to facilitate comfort and free movement for shoppers: and the planning has been developed with an eye to security, the maximum natural lighting and the highest efficiency of artificial illumination, ventilation and sanitation.”

Rentals were on an all-in basis, covering rent, rates, taxes, lighting, water and cleaning. The shops and stalls were quickly taken.

On the west side eleven new shops replacing the old huts were built in 1933. This masked the open market which had been set up in 1921 on that side. Dick Miller of the Steyne who joined Poores in 1887 was responsible for all the building work. He was still supervising the market, opening and closing it up to 1955. This was the first Town Shopping Centre “in the heart of Acton”.

BETWEEN THE WARS

During the post-war decade Poores enjoyed a high reputation. Before the war Timothy, whose knowledge and experience was widely known, has been called into projects all over the country. One such scheme brought forward by the war, materialised in 1920 when the firm built a curious tower-like structure for the North England Chemical Company at Spiral, Berwick-on-Tweed. This set two large tanks seventy feet up, one above the other with a 2ft 9½ in draw-off pipe, to keep dangerous chemicals away from each other, and from the main works. This was Timothy's solution to a difficult problem.

Poore & Son were able to buy the freehold of their property in the High Street in August 1926 just after the death of their founder Timothy Poore on 7th February that year, aged 88 years. He and Mary Ann celebrated their Diamond Wedding in 1922 when they received a message of congratulation from George V. By the time Timothy died, the business which started with one assistant had 200 employees. He retained an interest in them and the business until the end. Many had been with him for a long time, five for thirty years and no fewer than fifteen for twenty years.

Mrs Poore died in 1929 aged 90, Timothy Poore is not forgotten today. We quote from a recent address “Acton should honour him, for in many ways he made Acton”.

In 1933 Charles William Cawsey Poore (CWC) joined the firm after training with the Willen Key Company. He was then twenty. His association with the firm continues to this day.

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THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The thirties saw a trade depression followed by a slow climb back, interrupted by the Second World War. C. W. C. Poore served as Chief Officer of the North Acton Division of the Heavy Rescue Corps until he joined the Royal Air Force in 1940. Acton became a centre for the making of highly specialised, often secret, equipment for the forces to which Poores gave some service, but the period was marked by great shortages of materials.

The immediate post war period looked bleak. Shortages continued. Customers were issued with lists of controlled goods which required Priority Certificates, although Building Emergency Certificates were available in case of need. The shop itself suffered from bomb damage, particularly to the plate glass. This was no new thing to Poores since the increase in motor traffic had led to nine such incidents between 1930 and 1939, with one from a runaway horse!

In 1947, C.W.C. Poore was taken into the partnership. He had married Patricia Wyatt in 1941. The following year C.T. Poore died at the age of 84.

Charles Thomas Poore was born in 1864 in the Church Road house and like his father Timothy he had seen all the changes which made Acton an urban sprawl. He joined the firm in 1878 as an apprentice and when he was old enough the Fire Brigade. He was a member of the Constitutional Club. On the outbreak of the First World War he helped form the Acton Volunteer Movement and the Acton Rifle Club. Within the Poore organisation his contribution was notable for two things: his work on the Crown Street project and the re-organisation of the firm's accounting systems so as to keep track of the work in hand. This became of great interest to ironmongers throughout the country. He married Jessie Slade but there were no children so that his brother, W. T. Poore, became head of the business.

AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The years after the war saw a number of refinements which marked the change that was to come over the business in the post-war era. This began with a new face-lift for the shop in 1953 with the hanging of floral decorations above it. There were a number of attractive window displays, of which the most amusing was when witches broomsticks were hung in the windows on the occasion of the 1968 Bus Strike with the caption "Go to Work on a Broom".

In 1954, one overall company for Poores properties was formed called T. P. S. Properties Ltd.

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From 1961 the building department ceased to function. Much of the building and replacement of houses was now being done by the local authority using large building firms. House repairs were increasingly being done on a do-it-yourself basis. So Poores re-equipped themselves to meet these needs and those of the small subcontractors. Acton was no longer expanding; its population was falling. After the war-time boom, industry was gradually moving out as massive reorganisation took place. A vast clearance scheme was adopted for South Acton. For some years it looked like a desert.

In 1970 John Charles Poore (b 1949), son of C. W. Poore, was taken into the business. He begun his training at Green & London's, Fulham, in 1968. He was taken into partnership the following year.

Self selection was now complementing counter staff, largely because of cost. "Do-it-yourself" had replaced calling in the builder, if this was possible. It was necessary to take a hard look at Poores services, accommodation and organisation. There had been more retirements of long-serving staff.

It is worth recording here that in the history of the business fifteen members of staff served fifty years or more, nine over forty years, eight over thirty years, seventeen over twenty years and forty between ten and twenty years.

On 24th November 1971 William Telling Poore died aged 88 years. He was the last of Timothy's sons.

W. T. Poore, apprenticed in 1897, first made his mark at The Park Royal Show 1903-6. He returned there in 1914-19 to work for the War Office and went on to build up trade with the new factories on the Park Royal Estate (1920 onwards). He had married Elizabeth Cawsey in 1907. Their two surviving children were Evelyn Gertrude, who took many of the family photographs and Charles William Cawsey. He played an active part in the development of the Crown Street Market and with his son Charles gave the business a new look after the Second World War. He was a great a footballer in his young days, a keen member of Bowling Clubs later on. He was a founder member of the 1895 Old Actonians and a Mason. He and his wife celebrated their golden wedding in 1957. Mrs Poore, a stalwart worker for many charities, died in 1963.

All this meant that Charles and John Poore had to look first at creating a strong, younger management team. They considered also that they must learn more from the trade as a whole and so took a greater interest in the British Hardware Trade Federation. This led them to carry out a customer survey in 1974. Attempts had been made to open up the shops for better display but there were still 11,000 feet of warehousing to 3500 square feet of sales area A plan was adopted, after consultation with management and staff which increased the sales area to 7,320 square feet. They argued the more on display, the greater the sales. The change

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was accomplished quickly and efficiently without ever ceasing to trade. In 1976 John Poore was invited to speak about this re-organisation to the British Hardware Federation Conference at Eastbourne. The heading in the Trade journal was "Poores Streamline to Meet the Future".

There was much public interest in the "new shop", with increased trade. There were some outstanding window dressings. "Open Days", one opened by Wendy Craig, the actress, stimulated custom.

In 1976 the Distributive Industries Training Award for staff training was awarded to Poores of Acton. In the same year B & Q opened a "Do-it-Yourself" supermarket in the old Odeon Cinema just around the corner, almost on the spot where Poores began in Acton.

Careful promotion by Poores, as well as a knowledge of local needs, helped them face this competition with confidence and sales actually went up. People came by car to B & Q from outside Acton and finished up buying in Poores, using the B & Q car park!

In 1982, John Poore again addressed the British Hardware Federation this time on meeting the competition of the DIY supermarkets, by vigorous promotional activity, a constant search for new lines, special deals with manufacturers and making sure goods were in stock. John Poore became President of the Association in 1986. B & Q closed down in Acton in 1988.

In 1983, there had been a disastrous fire on the east side of Crown Street. The old covered Market used as a warehouse together with five shops was totally destroyed. The buildings were unsafe and had to be demolished.

Poores planned to rebuild a market on modern lines. The London Borough of Ealing, which had taken over Acton in 1965, was however re-planning Acton's shopping facilities. It was going to be a long time before Crown Street could be developed. Poores therefore decided to sell their Crown Street sites.

They had been developing another area of trade. As a result of growing demand, and as an insurance against electricity and gas cuts and shortages in the 70's there had been growing sales of Calor Gas. This was stored on land behind the High Street shops. It was felt safer and would provide a better and wider service if this part of the trade could be established on a separate site. (Poores LPG) Accordingly, a depot was opened in Alperton, Wembley, in August 1985. This made possible the setting up of a "next day" delivery.

In 1987 Poores acquired Gulletts, an old established hardware stores in Chorleywood and are in process of developing the trade.

In 1990, the London Borough of Ealing completed its plan for a new Town Centre which involved the demolition of a number of High Street shops including Poores.

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The fact that these were eighteenth century buildings carried no weight. They joined all the other important old buildings destroyed by successive authorities in Acton. Some of the old woodwork and some early window mechanisms were saved. The buildings were also recorded by the Acton History Group.

On April 2nd 1990 Poores moved to temporary premises in Colville Road where by March 1991 a new building was ready with its own car park.

The new building made it possible to centralise all Poole's activities on one site, including the Calor Gas department. Thus Poores was again in a position to offer service to the community while still being "Poores of Acton".

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SOURCES

The greater part of the information is derived from Poores own archives and large collection of photographs.

Other materials concerning the early years comes from Acton and Chiswick Censuses 1841-8f and Parish Records including those in the Berkshire Record Office.

For much of the Lobjoit story we had access to an unpublished manuscript from a member of the family, now in France, which was supplemented from parish records, the Tithe Award 1842, and rate books.

The history of the Ring Street premises can be traced in Acton Vestry and Church wardens books. Its subsequent story is found in the Acton Terrier" (Ealing Library, Local History Department).

For the Laundry History v T. & A. Harper Smith: "Soapsud Island" 1988.

For the Grand Junction Water Company: T' & A Harper Smith: "Water for Acton" 1993

For the Park Royal Show 1903.5 we used RASH Records in their Library at 35 Belgrave Square and The Institute of Agriculture History in Reading.

For Gas and Electricity in Acton see the booklets of that title by D. C. Knights 1989, 1990.

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