WASHBOURNE BROTHERS,  
Wine Merchants,  
GLOUCESTER.

Reference to Gloucestershire's varied interests would be complete without a description of Messrs. Washbourne Brothers' wine cellars and bonded warehouses in Bell Lane and Fox Entry. Through the courtesy of Mr. T. A. Washbourne (the present head of the firm) we were recently shown through the cellars, and were given the following information concerning them. It is to be regretted that no written description could give anything like an adequate idea of their extraordinary extent or of the value and variety of their contents.

The exact date of the construction of the cellars and the establishment of the business cannot now be ascertained, although the business has been referred to in a document dated 1767, and it had no doubt been in existence for a considerable period prior to that date. The cellars as they exist to-day are therefore upwards of a century and a-half old. The massive walls and arches, however, are in perfect condition, affording a striking illustration of the care and thoroughness with which they were constructed. Gloucester affords no more interesting contrast than that between the unbroken quiet of the cellars and the busy streets almost over-head—the Cross, the heart of the city's traffic, being but a stone's throw away, and when one enters the enormous underground passage he feels that he has stepped from the twentieth into the eighteenth century. It may be of interest to add that one of the wine bins in the cellars is paved with old Roman tiling.

Upon visiting the cellars the first impression one receives is that of immensity. From the point at which he enters them he looks down a vaulted passage 240 feet long. This passage is illuminated with a row of gas jets, revealing along the sides an enormous quantity of wines in casks and bottle. We present herewith an engraving made from a flash-light photograph showing a view in the cellars. While this photograph shows a peculiarly interesting scene, and gives a fair idea of the manner in which the wine is stored in casks and bottles, it must be understood that the camera could of necessity take an impression of but a very small portion of the passage.

But if one is surprised at the extent of the cellars, he is even more surprised at the great quantity and variety of their contents. Scores of large casks and many thousands of bottles are stored along the walls and in numerous separate bins. There are in all not fewer than 140 separate bins, the largest holding each from 100 to 200 dozen bottles.

The wines include importations from the best vineyards where the wine is cultivated, and much of it has been maturing for a number of years. The separate bins are so numbered and recorded that any desired kind of wine or any particular vintage may be quickly reached. The accurate system of keeping account of receipts and sales is remarkable, and at any given time the exact number of dozens in the cellars, the country vintage and character, are definitely known.

The temperature and atmospheric condition of the cellars are exactly suited to the proper keeping and maturing of wines, as the exposure of over a century has proven. The roof is several feet below the surface of the ground, thus insuring the same degree of temperature at all seasons of the year.

To attempt even a partial description of the various wines stored in the cellars, or even to give their names and vintage, would be wholly out of keeping with this brief article. The Messrs. Washbourne Brothers publish descriptive price-lists, giving full particulars as to quality and vintage of the various wines and spirits they offer. It is enough to say here that the stock is most complete, and that the most fastidious connoisseur, no matter what his particular taste may be, may find a wine exactly suited to his fancy. Some of the liqueurs—notably Scotch whiskies and brandies—bear the firm's exclusive label, and have gained a wide demand by reason of their exceptional quality.

The completeness of the stock and its high character are attested by the demands made upon it by men of wealth and standing, as well as by the general public. The firm have not only enjoyed a wide connection in this district for generations, but they have become favourably known in London and other large centres throughout the country. They have even exported wines and spirits to the United States, India, Australia, South Africa, and Malta.

In connection with their wine cellars they also have large warehouses for the storing of wines and spirits in bond. One of these warehouses is in Fox Entry, the others being in Crypt Alley adjoining the Bell Lane premises. Although the warehouses contain an enormous quantity of spirits, every arrangement has been made to facilitate handling, and consignments may be received or sent out at the minimum of labour. There are still other rooms used for the storage of liquors, including whiskies, gin, cordials, champagne, etc., on which duty has been paid, kept for any sudden demand.

Beside the cellars and warehouses there are a number of other departments, including large yards and sheds for the storage of casks and bottles, and a separate bottle cleaning department, which has been thoroughly modernised, as showing the care taken by the firm to ensure the absolute cleanliness of their goods. Every bottle, after being thoroughly washed inside and out by electrically driven machinery; after being taken to the cellars to be filled each bottle is again separately examined, those with the slightest flaw or soilage being rejected.

It is interesting to know that the business has been in the hands of the Washbourne family for something over a century, the present head of the firm (the father of the present senior partner), having become a member of the firm in 1821. The present Mr. T. A. Washbourne has himself been identified with the business since 1854; he was, indeed, born on the premises he now controls, though his birth-place in Southgate Street—one of Gloucester's fine old mansions—is now used by another firm.

Section in Bell Lane Cellars, Washbourne Bros. Gloucester

FRANCIS WINTLE,  
MITCHELDEN.

Malster, Brewer, and Miller.

It will not doubt surprise most people to learn that although Gloucestershire is not particularly noted as a brewing centre, it has one of the largest, if not the largest, individual breweries in the kingdom. Mr. Francis Wintle, who owns and controls the Forest Brewery, at Mitchelden, is entitled to this distinction. Apart from its large capacity, the Forest Brewery is noteworthy by reason of its exceptionally up-to-date and complete equipment, and a brief description of it will therefore be of interest.

The business was established in 1868 by Mr. Thomas Wintle (the father of the present proprietor) on the premises still used. The Forest brewery is, by every measure, most favourably situated, as it is several miles from any factory of any kind—an important point, as it is well-known that fermentation can be brought to perfection only in an absolutely pure atmosphere. Another advantage is the supply of excellent water, which is obtained from springs rising in the hills but a short distance away. The high quality of the water, due to its being drawn up by a process due to the purity of this water.

In 1870 (two years after the establishment of the brewery) a very important addition was made to it, a new malt house being erected. This malt house, which is still used for the purpose for which it was designed, was constructed of red sandstone obtained in the "Wilderness Quarries," but a mile away; in fact, the quarrying of the stone for this building was the origin of what has since become one of the largest and best quarries in the county. Besides the malt house a number of other additions have been made, the capacity of the brewery having several times been doubled. Among the important additions may be mentioned a new boiler and copper house, cask washing sheds, dry stores, and motor house, and still further enlargements are contemplated. The engraving which accompanies this article will give some idea of the general arrangement and size of the premises, which cover approximately two acres, exclusive of the meadow land adjoining.

In passing through the brewery one is impressed with two features which are in evidence in every department—the very unusual cleanliness everywhere in and about the buildings and yards, and the care which has...
be given to the smallest details which could in any manner affect the product. In the boiler and copper house, and in some other departments as well, the walls are of white glazed brick, and are, therefore, absolutely germ proof; the woodwork everywhere is painted and is frequently washed; the floors are of concrete; and the copper vessels and piping, and the pumps, engines and machinery generally, are spotless clean. As a further illustration of the care taken to prevent contamination from dust or from other causes, it may be interesting to add that the dust arising from the screening of the malt is collected and is conveyed over a long elevated pipe to a spot away from the building and is then discharged into a drain. This method effectively prevents the dust from flying about. The mechanical equipment throughout is all that a large expenditure and a thorough knowledge could make it.

The brewery plant also contains a cooperage and carpentering shop, a fitting and repairing shop, an exchange store, and warehouses for the vans and for the large motor which is used for delivering the premises. The premises are lighted throughout by gas, though the erection of an electric lighting plant is in contemplation.

Practically all of the barley used in the brewing is obtained from Herefordshire, which is one of the best barley growing districts in the kingdom. Before malting, the barley is put through a winnower, the waste, and all the small, broken and imperfect grains are rejected. The hops are obtained from Worcestershire. It need scarcely be said that absolutely no admixture of any kind is allowed into the tank or any of the frequent laboratory tests are made to insure uniformity of product. Mr. Wittle has made himself thoroughly familiar with the art of brewing and is interested in every detail of the business, having been interested in its management with his father, with whom he was associated for a number of years. Although the business has already grown to very large proportions, Mr. Harding is not content to remain stationary, but brings to its prosperity which is evidence to anyone who is privileged to inspect his plant, and it is safe to predict a still further growth.

JOHNS & SONS, 21. COMMERCIAL RD., GLouceSTER. Ship Chandlers, Sail Makers, and General Merchants.

Messrs. JOHNS & SONS, Ship Chandlers, Sail Makers, and General Merchants, are one of the oldest firms in Gloucester. Their extensive stock, both at Gloucester and Sharpness, makes them well able to cope with the supply of stores to the large ports which come to the port.

They are probably most widely known as tent proprietors, agricultural and general show contractors. Under the present new provision to take place, they give to the builders’ and engineers’ sundries stores branch of the business. Messrs. Johns and Son have recently started to cater for the requirements of farmers, and are represented on the principal markets in the West of England. To their many clients they give the satisfaction which is necessarily follows from a modern system of business capably managed.

EVERYONE who has followed the trend of events in recent years is familiar with the term ‘decentralisation—the restoration of the people from the crowded centres to the land.’ The tide of emigration that has so long flowed to the towns has been turned, and, however, the land may be so much as it was, is a sentiment which all may agree and is a consummation devoutly to be wished.