

CENTENARY OF BURY ST. EDMUND'S FIRM.

Record of Business of Messrs. Harvey G. Frost.

Some Outstanding Local Contracts.

An interesting ceremony will take place at the works of Messrs. Harvey G. Frost, in Westgate Road, on Saturday, December 22nd, when he will presented a large number of his regular employees with a varied selection of gifts, suitably inscribed, as mementoes of the centenary of the establishment of the firm.

Mr. Harvey Frost informs us that it was in April, 1834, that his grandfather severed his connection with another local firm of builders to set up in business on his own account in Collogo Street, in the premises on the East side of the street now occupied by Messrs. Marlow's Timber Company.

CONDITIONS A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

Mr. Harvey Frost showed us his books of account dating back these 100 years. It is interesting to note that wages in those days were 3d. per hour for labourers and 4½d. for skilled mechanics. A 10-hour day for six days a week was the regular routine, longer hours frequently being worked when the job was urgent. All sawing and planing was done by hand, of course, in those days. At the works at Westgate Road may still be seen the old saw-pit where, one man above and one below, the large two-handed cross-cut saws laboriously converted the logs of English timber into planks and boards for the use of the joiners. The making of even a plain panel door in those days entailed a very great amount more labour and skill than is demanded of the joiner in these days when sawing, jointing, planing and even sand-papering is more usually done throughout by machines. This explains why the joiner even 50 years ago had to serve an apprenticeship of seven years before he could call himself an "Improver" and had to possess a kit of tools which in present-day money would certainly cost not less than £40 to £50. Mr. Frost is proud of the fact, however, that he still musters a goodly number of joiners no less skilled than their prototypes of 1834, although the scope of their useful and profitable employment is rapidly diminishing owing to the increasing use of machinery. It is interesting to note that the names in the pay-roll are, in quite a number of cases, identical with those of 100 years ago.

THE LATE MR. HENRY FROST.

The late Mr. Henry Frost was articled to a firm of builders in London and was called home to Bury to take charge of the business, owing to the sudden death of its founder in 1875.

Mr. Henry Frost was of a retiring disposition and did not enter much into the public life of the town, but he will be remembered as a zealous member of the Guildhall Feoffment Trust and as churchwarden of St. Mary's Church, of which church his father-in-law, Robert Harvey, was churchwarden in 1834. He rapidly enhanced the reputation for high class workmanship and honesty of dealing established by his father and now maintained by his son. His tall figure with beard and square felt hat, and the alert and cheerful bearded face of his manager, the late Mr. Robert Geard, must be very familiar to many of our readers. Mr. Henry Frost established a prosperous brickworks at Sicklesmere for a number of years and many buildings in the town are built with these bricks, notably the handsome office premises of Messrs. Greene, King and Sons, in Westgate Street, which was one of the last contracts carried out by Mr. Henry Frost. Shortly after retiring from the business he moved to Gorleston-on-Sea, where he died in 1930.

MR. HARVEY FROST'S RECORD.

The present proprietor of the firm, Mr. Harvey Frost, was educated at Trent College, Derbyshire. He was articled to a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers, and admitted as a student of the Institute in 1911, simultaneously studying and taking examinations in Building Construction and Sanitary Engineering.

Gazetted to a commission in the 9th Batt. Suffolk Regiment, in 1914, he commanded a company in France in 1915. He was posted as Observer to the Royal Flying Corps in France in 1916, and was wounded and taken prisoner in an aerial combat on April 1st, 1916, falling 6,000 feet out of control. Exchanged as permanently incapacitated in 1917 he then served on the staff of the Royal Aeronautical College at Bristol until the Armistice.

He was elected an Associate of the Institute of Builders in 1929 and a Member in 1933, and has been Chairman of the Bury St. Edmund's District Building and Allied Trades Employers' Association for several years past.

Mr. Harvey Frost succeeded his father in the control of the firm in 1920. Aably assisted by his wife, who holds an honours degree in Mathematics in the University of London and takes an active part in the management, he has greatly expanded the business on the solid foundation laid by his father and grandfather.

With the advantage of his technical training and a natural artistic ability, Mr. Harvey Frost has been able to bring into the business qualities which are only too rare in the builder of to-day. Each year is adding to the number of lasting memorials to the skill and artistic sense of this firm which abound in this district.

STANDING TRIBUTES TO FIRM'S WORK.

There can scarcely be a street in the town which does not bear some token of the handiwork of the firm. Among more recent works may be mentioned the following:—

New Nurses' Hostel for West Suffolk General Hospital, 1924. Architect: Mr. Sidney Naish, M.S.A., of Bury St. Edmund's. This hostel was opened by H.R.H. Princess Mary in 1924.

New Out-Patients' Department for West Suffolk General Hospital. Architects: Messrs. Naish and Mitchell, A.R.I.B.A., Bury St. Edmund's. Opened by His Grace the Duke of Grafton, 1929.

Beet Sugar Factory, Bury St. Edmund's, for the United Sugar Co. Ltd., 1925-26. Architect: Dr. Oscar Faber, O.B.E., D.S.C., M.Inst.C.E., etc. Commenced in February, 1925, sugar being manufactured in November of the same year. Residences for the Manager and Assistant Manager of the United Sugar Co., Ltd. in Holderness Road, designed by Mr. Harvey Frost, 1926.

Smallbridge Hall, Suffolk, for the Most Hon. the Marchioness of Bristol, 1930. Designs and all details prepared by Mr. Harvey G. Frost in conjunction with her Ladyship. The work included extensive drainage schemes, moat irrigation, water supply, central heating, electric light, drives and bridges, and large new building.

Hardwick Manor, for Mr. H. W. Howitt, 1927 (copiously illustrated in "The Builder," March 18th, 1932). Architects: Messrs. Kersey, Gale and Spooner, F.R.I.B.A.

Extensive alterations and additions to Lackford Manor for Mr. Andrew Hepburn. Architect: Mr. Gordon L. Broad, A.R.I.B.A., F.S.I., 1930.

HARVEY FROST TWO.

New Hall and Social Room and Shops, Risbygate Street, for the Bury St. Edmund's Co-operative Society, Ltd. Architects: Messrs. Hunt and Coates, L.R.I.B.A., 1930.

New Shop for Messrs. Montague Burton, Ltd. Architects: Messrs. Montague Burton, Ltd., 1933.

New Central Promises and Butchery and Hardware Departments, Brentgovel and Garland Street, for the Bury St. Edmund's Co-operative Society Ltd. Architects: Messrs. C.W.S., Ltd., 1933 and 1934.

The Prior's Inn, Bury St. Edmund's, for Messrs. Greene, King and Sons., Ltd. (the first inn to be built in Bury in living memory.) Architects: Messrs. Naish and Mitchell, F.R.I.B.A., 1933.

The Electricity Showrooms for the Bury St. Edmund's Town Council. Architects: Messrs. Naish and Mitchell, F.R.I.B.A., 1934.

Extensive alterations and additions to the Old Rectory, Great Whelnotham, for Mr. E. L. D. Lake. Architect: Mr. Basil Oliver, F.R.I.B.A., 1934.

Numerous other works requiring special knowledge and ability have been entrusted to Mr. Harvey Frost and many private residences of value from £500 to £5,000 have been both designed and built by him. In some cases even the furniture has been designed and made by hand in his own works in Westgate Road.

THE HARDWICK ESTATE.

Bury St. Edmund's is indebted to Mr. Harvey Frost for assisting to preserve from the vandalism of the speculative builder the prettiest corner of the old Hardwicke estate. The charming house which he has designed and built for himself at the N.W. corner of the old park, is surrounded by 20 acres of park and woodland, which present a very long frontage of beautiful trees to the Hardwick Lane. Mr. Frost tells us that it will always be his endeavour to maintain this in its present beauty. On the North side of this lane he owns a further 20 acres, which he is developing in careful collaboration with the Town Planning Authorities, to make this corner of Bury as natural and attractive as possible. The little colony of houses already erected on the N.W. corner of the old Stonebridge Farm are certainly very pleasing. We understand that plans for further houses are under consideration and also the question of driving a road in from the top of Vinery Road to develop the centre portion of the site. With a magnificent view over the town on the North side and on the South side a sunny slope running down to the little stream and the lane; with the best of the Hardwick trees in the background—this is a magnificent site with very great possibilities.

We understand that, in addition to the assistance of the Town Planning Officer, Mr. Frost is enlisting the expert artistic advice of Mr. W. H. Mitchell, F.R.I.B.A., the architect for our new schools, whose many designs of public and private buildings in the district erected during the last few years have so rapidly achieved for him a sterling reputation.
