

CHAPTER 6

EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION

At the end of the previous chapter we learned that the Castle & Beech partnership finally came to an end in 1869 and that this occurred at a difficult time for the family. Henry Castle had died in May 1865 and his wife Harriet survived him for only a short period when she passed away in December 1867.

A study of the wills does not reveal a great deal about the shipbreaking business as most of the money relating to the estates was left in trust; this was the case with both Henry and Harriet and all their children were named beneficiaries of the trust created after Harriet's death. Clearly there were a considerable number of problems to be sorted out involving probably the trust arrangements set up after Henry's death as well. It is not surprising therefore, that we learn that a dispute occurred over the will of Harriet and that court action ensued between Samuel Nash, Harriet's brother and executor of her estate, and the beneficiaries. The following details have been elicited in connection therewith ¹

"Cause number: 1868 N42.

Short title: Nash v Castle.

Documents: Bill, disclaimer.

Plaintiffs: Samuel Nash.

Defendants: John Thomas Frederick Castle (abroad), Henry Rydon, Sidney Nash Castle, Abercrombie Castle, Henry George Castle and Marcellus Purnell Castle, Thomas Nash Castle, Maria Louisa Castle and Septimus Castle".

There must have been many additional family problems that needed to be sorted out as well following Harriet's death and the exact outcome of the dispute over her will is not known but it was clearly resolved satisfactorily as funds continued to be made available, possibly via the family trusts, to finance the shipbreaking business. However, it is noteworthy that Samuel Nash himself became bankrupt in December 1869 - see below.

THE LONDON GAZETTE, OCTOBER 29, 1869 Issue 23550 page 27 of 60

THE SEAL OF THE COURT.

*NOTICE is hereby given, that the following is a copy
of an entry made in the book kept by the Chief
Registrar of the Court of Bankruptcy for the Registration
of Trust Deeds for the benefit of Creditors, Composition
and Inspectorship Deeds executed by a Debtor, as required
by the Bankruptcy Act, 1861, secs. 187, 192, 194, 196 and
198 and the Bankruptcy Amendment Act, 1868.*

Number—39,772.

*Title of Deed, whether Deed of Assignment, Composition,
or inspectorship—Assignment.*

Date of Deed—19th October, 1869.

Date of execution by Debtor—19th October, 1869.

*Name and description of the Debtor, as in the Deed
Samuel Nash, of Cardiff, in the county of Glamorgan,
Merchant Ship Owner and Ship Broker.*

*The names and descriptions of the Trustees, or other
parties to the Deed, not including the Creditors—*

*Joseph Elliott, of aforesaid, Merchant, and John
Davies, of the same Cardiff place. Ship Broker.*

*A short statement of the nature of the Deed—Assignment
by debtor of his estate and effects, to be administered
for the benefit of his creditors, as in bankruptcy;
and released to him.*

When left for Registration—28th October 1869 at two o'clock.

At the present time, we know nothing further about these difficult underlying circumstances, but suffice to say that the family matters were certainly not straightforward over the years.

However, as far as the shipbreaking business now run exclusively by Sidney Nash and his brother Abercrombie is concerned, the business of ship purchases, timber trading and other activities obviously continued on a viable basis.

In view of the amount of diversification that took place in this period of the shipbreaking history, we have through necessity had to separate the story into different Chapters, which deal with the many different aspects involved - see Chapters 8, 9 and 10. In so doing we have also been able to encompass a wider time-scale under each activity than just the current period under review.

First of all the story of the recycling of the ships timbers into many varied outdoor furniture products as well as timber merchandising will be dealt with exclusively in Chapter 8 and therefore the details therein should be read in conjunction with the supplementary information and history recorded in this particular chapter. Accordingly, at this stage, the history is written on a modular basis so that the reader can follow more fully the developments concerned. However, we have made cross references, where appropriate, within the narratives of each of the chapters affected in order to foster a greater understanding of all the related situations described.

Secondly, the story of the ships figureheads that passed through Castles hands has fascinated many people over the years. We have devoted Chapter 9 exclusively to this subject and it deals with the many historic figureheads that adorned the yards and premises of the business for decades up to the disastrous bombing of the London office in 1941.

Finally, as the large number of ships broken up during this period was also substantial, we have included much of the information relating to the business operations within the period now being reviewed in Chapter 10 - Scale of Activities. This enables the reader to study separately the shipbreaking activity levels not only in this period but also over the whole time span starting in 1861 and finishing in 1935.

We now return to the story regarding the operations of Sidney and Abercrombie Castle.

We believe that additional wharf facilities were acquired at Long's Wharf, Woolwich in 1872 and this was likely due to the limitations in space at Baltic Wharf and at Anchor & Hope Wharf, Charlton, which prevented more than a certain number of ships being dismantled at any one time. In addition, the large quantities of timber generated by the breaking activities would also have pressurised the storage facilities available.

The Baltic Wharf lease was also presenting some difficulties as we learned that a Mr J Matthews held the head lease of the Baltic Wharf site. It appears to have become imperative for the lease to be acquired, as an under lease or tenancy was not sufficiently secure for the looming opportunity in the number of wooden sailing ships being sold out of the Navy for breaking purposes. Eventually the main lease at Baltic Wharf was assigned first to Sidney Nash and Abercrombie by The Crown Estate and then transferred into Sidney Nash's name after Abercrombie had retired from the partnership. The lease with Bowater Estates at Longs Wharf would have been similarly dealt with.³ This period therefore was obviously a time of consolidation for the business and may have taken several years to sort out.

Furthermore, the lease of Bridge Wharf at Millbank held by the Freeman family was also acquired around this time and therefore extended the yard area at Millbank to its familiar size, as viewed in many photographs and pictures in the late 1890s and early 1900s. The Freeman Yard was originally leased to William Freeman, stonemason, in 1839, who had been granted a term expiring in 1909 from the Crown Estate.⁴ However Bridge Wharf became part of the Baltic Wharf site later than the leasehold arrangement effected in 1845

when plots 5 & 6 only were occupied by Henry Castle - see Chapter 4. We do not know the date on which an assignment of the lease for Bridge Wharf did take place as William Freeman continued there for some time after 1845. William died in 1874 and we consider Sidney and Abercrombie Castle probably acquired the lease at that time when they were also tidying up the other lease arrangements at Baltic Wharf.

Clearly the expansion of the business premises proved to be opportune as until 1872 half the ships acquired were smaller, such as paddle boats and gunboats and therefore more easily broken up and capable of being towed to Baltic Wharf.

Whilst the re-organisation of the business was taking place no further ships were acquired for three years until 1875. Following this three year consolidation period there was a sudden upsurge in 1875 when twelve out of the sixteen ships broken up were large 1st Rate, 2nd Rate, 3rd Rate, 4th Rate and 5th Rate ships and/or Frigates - see Chapter 10.

However, at this stage in the business's development a further structural change took place when Abercrombie Castle decided he wished to withdraw from the partnership with his brother and this happened on 31st March 1877. We do not know the reasons for this change but it did mean that further financial pressure would have to be shouldered by Sidney Nash, by then the sole proprietor of the business. It is therefore unsurprising that there were little or no shipbreaking activities during the ensuing years as in all probability money would have had to be found to pay out the retiring partner. With no incoming new partner with fresh capital the payments to Abercrombie would realistically have had to be paid out over a number of years.

THE LONDON GAZETTE, AUGUST 14, 1877

NOTICE is hereby given, that the Partnership heretofore subsisting between us the undersigned, Sidney Nash Castle and Abercrombie Castle, carrying on business at Baltic Wharf, Millbank, in the County of Middlesex, and at Woolwich, in the county of Kent, as Shipbreakers, Timber Merchants, Barge Builders, Barge Owners, and Lightermen, under the style or firm of Henry Castle and Sons, was dissolved, on the 31st day of March last, by mutual consent. All debts due to and owing by the said firm will be received and paid by the said Sidney Nash Castle, by whom alone the said business will in future be carried on.

Dated this 10th day of August, 1877.

Sidney N. Castle, Abercrombie Castle

There were no further purchases until the new Admiralty contract in 1882, announced in the Admiralty Digest of that year and from 1882 up to 1894 some 69 HM ships were broken up at Castles yards - see Chapter 10 - representing an average of nearly four ships per annum. This was also the time when the furniture manufacturing started in a significant way and this period heralds the beginning of the major era of recycling ships' timbers from old Men O' War, mainly as garden furniture.

Many famous ships are listed as being broken up in this period, particularly the well-known Ironclads. Undoubtedly, a whole book could be written about the many actions and exploits of these ships as they traversed the globe at the height of British naval supremacy.

It is interesting that during the Castle & Beech era questions were often raised in the press and even in Parliament regarding the prices being obtained for the ships being disposed of and this issue continued for many years afterwards. We note on 1st March 1875, a year of activity for the disposal of ships, that the following extracts of questions raised in the House were recorded:

NAVY—SALE OF WOODEN SHIPS OF WAR—QUESTION ⁵

MR. E. J. REED

"asked the First Lord of the Admiralty, Whether it is true that the Admiralty has entered into a Contract with a firm of Shipbreakers for the sale of a considerable number of wooden vessels of Her Majesty's Navy; and, if so, whether any public notice of the intention to sell was given; and if he would state to the House why the ships were not offered for sale by public auction, according to the late practice of the Admiralty; whether the Purchase Department made the Contract in question, as usual; and, if not, who made the Contract; and, whether he would lay upon the Table of the House a list of the vessels sold and the contract prices?"

MR. HUNT

"Sir, the Purchase Department has agreed with Messrs. Castle for the sale to them of 35,000 tons of old ships at various rates per ton, according to the class of ship. No public notice was given of the intention to sell, except by statement in the House last year as to the desirability of disposing of unserviceable ships, which led to Messrs. Castle's proposal. No particular ships were named in the agreement with that firm; but a schedule of ships has since been made out, and will be part of the formal contract. Ships have been sold by the Admiralty of late years in three different ways—namely, by public auction, by tender, and by private treaty, and experience has shown that the best terms have by no means always been obtained by auction sales. If the hon. Gentleman likes to move for a copy of the contract, it will be laid on the Table."

We have also come across several interesting situations which illuminate the style and manner of activity in running the business during this period of the firm's history. There are not many such matters in the public domain, but when we do find them it is considered worthwhile itemising them in full, as there is usually a wealth of detail contained therein to add flavour and a feel of reality to the occasion described. One such incident relates to the pilfering of copper bolts from the company stores in 1885 and we detail the court proceedings below.⁶

88. FRANCIS FRAZIER (34), JOSEPH MILLAN (32), GEORGE MILLAN (35), and JOHN SUTER (44), Stealing three copper bolts of Sydney (sic) Nash Castle, the master of Frazier and Joseph and George Millan. FRAZIER, JOSEPH MILLAN, and GEORGE MILLAN PLEADED GUILTY.

MR. HORACE AVORY Prosecuted; MESSRS. MONTAGU WILLIAMS and DABWIN Defended Suter.

SYDNEY(sic) CASTLE - I am the son of Sydney Nash Castle, sole proprietor of the business of Henry Castle and Sons, of Long's Wharf, Charlton and the Baltic Wharf, Westminster—for years past we have been the sole contractors with the Admiralty for the purchase of Government ships—when purchased they are taken to the wharf at Charlton for the purpose of being broken up—we have about 200 men there—Frazier was employed as storekeeper, at a place where copper bolts, among other things, are taken to be cleaned and packed—no one has authority to sell them; we sell them wholesale, five tons at a time; very seldom less; the wholesale price is 7d., 7 1/2d., and 8d. per lb.; 7d. is the lowest; each of them weighs about 8lb. to 10lb.—they are all stamped with the broad arrow in five or six different places—I knew nothing of Suter until these proceedings—we have never sold any copper bolts to him—on 31st October Sergeant Fawke came to me, and I went with him to the premises of Mr. Nightingale, 51, Mount Pleasant, Clerkenwell—I there saw about 7 cwt. of these copper bolts, all of which I identified as having come from our premises, and which had come out of Government ships—these (produced) are two of them.

Cross-examined. I had not found any deficiency of bolts that had come by the barges—we are the sole firm that buy them from the Government; I am quite sure of that—we sell to large merchants in the City at various prices—we once sold as little as a ton—the ships are broken up on the shore—Suter is a marine store dealer.

Re-examined. I know his shop at Woolwich, I pass it daily; it is about four minutes' walk from our premises—we have found a general deficiency in bolts for the last twelve months.

SYDNEY(sic) NASH CASTLE. I am the proprietor of this business, and have had experience of it over 25 years—we are at the present moment the only firm that purchase Government ships—as a rule we never sell a less quantity than five tons.

JOHN NIGHTINGALE. I am a brassfounder of 51, Mount Pleasant, Clerkenwell—I carry on business as Nightingale and Sawyer—I know Suter and have had transactions with him since February last; I have bought metal off him, copper, brass, and gun metal—he carried on business at Charlton—I have entered in my books every transaction with him—I have bought copper bolts off him between February and the present time; sometimes once a week, sometimes a fortnight would elapse—I paid him by cheque or cash—there were always copper bolts in the metal he sold me, more or less—they were bolts of this description; I cannot say how many, they varied, but there was always a proportion; I used to buy mixed lots, I never bought bolts especially—between 19th February and 30th October I have paid him 230l. for copper alone, apart from the brass and gun metal—the quantity of copper varied from 1 cwt. up to 6 cwt.—they were usually small mixed lots—I paid him 6 1/2d. per lb. for the copper—I received copper bolts from him on 23rd and 30th October, and paid him by cheque—Tuesday, 30th October, was the very last transaction on which I purchased copper bolts off him; there was 5 cwt. 1 qr. 26 lb. of mixed copper, for which I paid him 16l. 3s. 5d., and he gave me this receipt, signed by him in my presence, "John Suter"—on 31st Detective Fawke came to my premises with Mr. Castle, jun.—I showed him about 7 cwt. of these copper bolts on my premises—he saw them lying in the store just as they were left immediately previous, with other deliveries, and he identified them—he noticed that they were marked with the broad arrow—they were the copper bolts I had received from Suter.

Cross-examined. I have purchased copper bolts with the broad arrow on them from other persons not confined to Suter; we deal with the largest merchants—I did not think I was doing any harm in buying them with the broad arrow on them—we pay a fair price, and trust to the person we deal with—the price we have paid has been estimated as being fair—Suter gave me the receipt on our own printed bill-head—if a man collected these in small quantities, and afterwards sold them in large, he would have to pay the expense of carting them to our place—they were delivered free to me—I could not say that all which Mr. Castle saw were bought off Suter.

Re-examined. Out of the 7 cwt. I should say all but one or two bolts came from Suter—we have not bought copper bolts marked with the broad arrow recently; it comes in mixed lots, and I have not bought mixed lots recently; I mean not during the last three or four months, except from Suter—I have never bought any from Mr. Castle—I don't know what his wholesale price is.

MATTHEW PEARCE. I was in Suter's employ, at 1, Prospect Bow, Woolwich—a boy named Crawford was also employed there—I know Frazier—I have seen him at Suter's shop twice, and sometimes three times a week for the last three months—he brought copper bolts like these—sometimes he had them on his shoulder, sometimes under his arm, and sometimes under his coat, two or three at a time—Suter was there at the time—I never saw Suter pay for them—Frazier brought them sometimes between 7 and 8 in the morning, and sometimes between 5 and 6 in the evening—Suter kept books—I have seen him write in a black one and in a red one—I did not say before the Magistrate that I never saw any—I was there when Suter was taken into custody on 1st November—the black book was then in his writing desk on the bench in the shop—the red book got lost when they were repairing the house—we looked for it, and could not find it—that was about five weeks ago.

Cross-examined. This (produced) is the black book—I am seldom at home; I am generally out with the horse, selling coals and wood—the shop opens at 7 in the morning, and closes between 9 and 10—when Frazier came it was during the hours of business—I said before the Magistrate "I can't say Suter did not pay for the bolts at the time he bought them".

By the COURT. There were scales in the shop—I have not seen anything weighed when Frazier came.

HENRY WILLIAM CRAWFORD. I was in Suter's employ about twelve months—I know Frazier by sight—I have seen him at Suter's shop once or twice or three times a week for the last five or six months—he brought copper bolts similar to these, sometimes under his coat, sometimes under his arm, and sometimes in a bag—he brought two or three at a time—he left them there—Suter took them in—I have heard money pass on each occasion—I never saw how much it was—the last time I saw him there was Monday, 29th October, from 7 to 9 in the morning—he generally used to come at that time, sometimes in the evening between 5 and 6—I think he brought three copper bolts on the 29th—I have also seen the two Millans bring copper bolts—I have not seen any others bring them—I have seen Suter write in a black book—I can't tell

the last time I saw it—I saw it used whenever there was any work from Siemens's; it was a cartage book. Cross-examined. I said before the Magistrate "I did not think there was anything wrong when they brought the bolts"—I heard the price mentioned by Suter, 5 1/2d. a pound.

FREDERICK FAWKE (Police Sergeant R). On 31st October I went to Mr. Nightingale's, and there saw a quantity of copper bolts similar to those produced—in consequence of what Mr. Nightingale said, I went with Morgan to Suter's premises—I did not see him on that day—I went again on the morning of 1st November—I said "I am a police officer; have you bought any copper bolts recently?"—he said "No"—I said "Have you sold any?"—he said "No"—I said "Have you carted any for any one?"—he said "No"—I said "I wish you to understand what I have said to you," and I repeated the questions, and he answered "No"—I then produced two copper bolts similar to these, and said "I have received these from Messrs Nightingale, at Clerkenwell"—he said "Yes, I did sell them some"—I said "I shall take you into custody for stealing a quantity of copper bolts, the property of Messrs. Castle and Sons"—he made no reply—I took him to the station, and returned and searched the premises—I found no books—I saw no writing desk on the counter—I have never seen this black book till to-day.

Cross-examined. The back part of the house was under repair, and in great confusion—I took down in writing what Suter said, and I produce it—Morgan was there at the time.

WILLIAM MORGAN (Police Sergeant R). I was present when Fawke took Suter into custody (The witness gave the same statement as Fawke).

Cross-examined. I was in Court when Fawke was examined—Suter gave the names of the other prisoners as the persons of whom he had bought the things—it was owing to his information that I took them.

Re-examined. He sent for me to his cell, and asked what I was going to do—I said, "What are you going to do? You said you were not going to touch the others"—he said I will give their names; there is George and Joe Millan, and Deaffy, at work at Castle's"—I said, "Where do they live?"—he said, "I know that George lives in the Narrow Way; I could not tell you where the others live".

Suter's Statement before the Magistrate. "All the bolts I bought off those three men; they told me they chopped wood, and bought the timber at the ship-breaking yard".

SUTER—GUILTY. He received a good character.—Eighteen Months' Hard Labour. FRAZIER, GEORGE MILLAN, and JOSEPH MILLAN—Eighteen Months' Hard Labour each.*

It was at this time during the early 1880s that the growth in the manufacture of garden furniture took place, adding a significant area of diversification to the Company's traditional activity in shipbreaking. Its success resulted in Sidney, trading as H. Castle & Sons, receiving an appointment as Manufacturers of Garden Seats to Her Majesty following the supply of garden seats to furnish the grounds of Buckingham Palace in celebration of the Golden Jubilee in 1887 ⁷ - see Chapter 8.

Clearly these increased activity levels, including a surge in shipbreaking volumes as well, eventually led to the need for Sidney Nash to review the financial risks encountered in the size and volume of business being transacted. Business life was always a hazardous matter in nineteenth century England and the exposure to unforeseen crises and economic pressures made it very difficult to sustain the status of a sole proprietor with all the associated risks of personal bankruptcy if the business should fail. Accordingly, a decision was made in 1894 to form a Limited Company and to transfer the ownership of the business into a vehicle with limited liability called Henry Castle & Sons Limited. Clearly Sidney had also decided that bringing his sons, Sidney and Philip, into the business as shareholders was also opportune. The agreement drawn up is available to us and is set out below for perusal by the reader.

SIDNEY NASH CASTLE ESQ
and
HENRY CASTLE & SONS LIMITED
Conditional AGREEMENT

An Agreement made the twelfth day of November one thousand, eight hundred and ninety four BETWEEN Sidney Nash Castle of Baltic Wharf Millbank Westminster London carrying on alone the business of Ship Breaker Timber Merchant and Barge Owner under the style or firm of "Henry Castle & Sons" (hereinafter called "the Vendor") of the one part and Henry Castle & Sons Ltd whose registered office is at Baltic Wharf Millbank aforesaid (hereinafter called "the Company") of the other part WHEREAS the Vendor on the first day of October one thousand eight hundred and ninety two carried on and has since carried on and now carries on the said business and in connection therewith is possessed of divers leasehold properties and other assets AND WHEREAS the Company has been registered under the Companies Acts 1862 to 1890 as a Joint Stock Company with liability limited by shares and having a nominal Capital of Seventy thousand pounds divided into Three thousand Preference Shares of Ten pounds each entitling the holder to a fixed cumulative preferential dividend at the rate of six pounds per cent per annum on the Capital paid up or deemed to be paid up thereon and to cash both as regards dividends and capital in priority to the Ordinary Shares and Four thousand Ordinary Shares of Ten pounds each AND WHEREAS one of the objects of the Company is as stated in its Memorandum of Association to acquire and take over as a going concern the said business and all or any of the assets and liabilities thereof or in connection therewith AND WHEREAS the profits of the said business since the thirtieth day of September One thousand and eight hundred and ninety two have not yet been ascertained and it is not intended to ascertain the profits since that date until after the thirtieth day of September one thousand eight hundred and ninety five and as soon after that date as possible the profits of the said business for the three years to the said thirtieth day of September One thousand eight hundred and ninety five inclusive will be ascertained AND WHEREAS the Vendor and the Company have determined to enter into the Agreement hereinafter contained for the Sale to the Company of the said business as a going concern together with the assets and subject to the liabilities in connection therewith as from and inclusive of the said first day of October One thousand eight hundred and ninety two AND WHEREAS the Company has determined to create and issue First Mortgage Debenture Stock for fifty thousand pounds bearing interest at the rate of four and a half pounds per cent per annum to be secured by a Mortgage of the said leasehold properties and a floating charge on all the other assets of and the undertaking of the Company

NOW IT IS hereby agreed as follows:-

1. The Vendor shall sell and the Company shall purchase as a going concern as on and from the said first day of October One thousand eight hundred and ninety two the following property:-

1st - The goodwill of the said partnership business with the exclusive right to use the name of "Henry Castle & Sons" as part of the name of the Company and to represent such Company as carrying on the said business in continuation of the Vendor and in succession to him.

Secondly - All the leasehold property to which the Vendor is entitled in connection with the said business.

Thirdly - All the stock in trade plant machinery office furniture and fittings to which the Vendor is entitled in connection with the said business.

Fourthly - All debts owing to the Vendor in connection with the said business on or subsequently to the said first day of October One thousand eight hundred and ninety-two and the full benefit of all securities for the same and also all Cash of the Vendor standing to the credit of the said partnership business or in hand in connection with the said business.

Fifthly - The full benefit of all pending contracts orders and engagements in connection with the said business.

Sixthly - All other assets of the Vendor in connection with the said business.

2. Part of the consideration for the said Sale shall be the sum of Eighty thousand pounds whereof Ten

thousand pounds shall be paid in cash by the Company to the Vendor and Seventy thousand pounds shall be satisfied by the allotment and issue by the Company to the Vendor or as he may in writing direct of the said Three thousand Preference Shares in the capital of the Company which shall be numbered 1 to 3000 both inclusive and of the said Four thousand Ordinary Shares in the Capital of the Company which shall be numbered 3001 to 7000 both inclusive and all which said Preference and Ordinary Shares so to be allotted and issued shall be deemed for all purposes to be fully paid.

3. As the residue of the consideration for the said sale of the Company shall pay satisfy discharge perform and fulfil all the debts and liabilities contracts orders and engagements of the Vendor in relation to the said business, and shall indemnify him against all proceedings claims and demands in respect thereof.

4. The Title of the Vendor to the said leasehold and other premises hereby agreed to be sold shall be accepted without investigation or objection.

5. The purchase shall be completed on or before the thirty first day of January One thousand eight hundred and ninety five when possession of the property shall be given to the Company and the said Three thousand Preference and Four thousand Ordinary Shares of the Company shall be allotted and issued as aforesaid and the said Ten thousand pounds cash shall be paid and thereupon the Vendor shall do all such assurances and things as may reasonably be required by the Company for vesting in it the said premises hereby agreed to be sold and giving to it the full benefit of this Agreement.

6. The Vendor shall not before the expiration of twenty years from the said first day of October One thousand eight hundred and ninety two either alone or jointly with or as Manager or Agent or any other person or persons or Company directly or indirectly carry on or be engaged or concerned or interested in the business of a Shipbreaker Timber Merchant or Barge Owner nor permit or suffer his name to be used or employed in carrying on or in connection with the said business save so far as the Vendor shall as a Member or Director of the Company be interested in the Company.

7. As respects the profits of the said business for the said three years from the first October One thousand eight hundred and ninety two to the thirtieth of September One thousand eight hundred and ninety five both inclusive such profits shall be ascertained as soon as possible after the last mentioned date and shall belong to the Company and be deemed the profits of the Company for the period from the date of incorporation of the Company to the said thirtieth September One thousand eight hundred and ninety five but there shall be allowed thereout and accordingly deducted therefrom all sums drawn by or debited against the Vendor in respect of his drawings or payments for him out of the said business for the period from first October One thousand eight hundred and ninety two to the date of the incorporation of the Company.

8. The costs of and incident to the preparation and negotiation for and the perusal and execution of this Agreement and of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Company and of the assurances and things to be done pursuant to this Agreement and generally the costs charges and expenses in relation to the formation and establishment of the Company shall be borne by the Company.

9. The company shall not for a period of ten years from its incorporation repeal alter or modify Clauses Nos. 13 to 21 both inclusive or Clauses Nos. 72, 74, 75 and 88 of its Articles of Association as filed with the Memorandum thereof without the written consent of the Vendor his executors or administrators being a Member or Members of the Company.

10. If any difference shall arise between the parties hereto touching these presents or the construction hereof or any clause or thing herein contained or any matter any way connected with these presents or the operation thereof or the rights duties or liabilities of either of the parties hereto in connection with the premises then and in every or any such case the matter in difference shall be referred to Arbitration pursuant to the Arbitration Act of 1889 or any then subsisting statutory modification thereof.

11. Unless before the thirty first day of December One thousand eight hundred and ninety four at least Thirty five thousand pounds of the said First Mortgage Debenture Stock so as aforesaid determined to be created and issued shall have been taken up and a deposit paid thereon the Vendors or the Company may by notice in writing to the other rescind this Agreement and the decision shall not give rise to any claim for compensation expenses or otherwise.

AS WITNESS the hand of the said Sidney Nash Castle and the Common Seal
of the Company the day and year first above written.

Sidney N. Castle
Witness to the signature of
Sidney Nash Castle
Herbert Walton
Hollams Sons Coward and Hawksley
Mincing Lane, London
The common Seal of Henry Castle & Sons
Limited was affixed hereto
pursuant to a Resolution of the Board of
Directors passed and dated twenty first day
of November 1894 in the presence of
Sidney N Castle) Directors
Sidney Castle Junior)
A.W. Saward Secretary

A copy of this document has been filed with the Registrar of Joint Stock
Companies

As will be noted the business was valued at £80,000 at that time in 1894, a not inconsiderable sum. Sidney Nash received £10,000 in cash and the balance in preference and ordinary shares in the newly formed company.

We do not have available the accounts for the financial years ending on 30th September each year but as a three year period has been referred to in clause 7 we are confident that the goodwill of the company was probably valued on the average of the profits for the three year period from 1890 to 1892. The proposed final Goodwill figure was £15,000, which indicates that the average annual profit of the company may have been in the region of £5,000 per annum in the early years of the 1890s.

The details of the shareholdings in the new company on the 18th March 1895 were as follows: ⁹

	Pref.	Ord.
Sidney Nash Castle	3,000	3,892
Helen Margaret Castle	-	1
Sidney Castle Junior	-	51
Katherine Cornforth Castle	-	1
Philip Castle	-	51
Edgar Castle	-	1
Helen Blanche Castle	-	1
Florence Millicent Castle	-	1
Jessie Maud May Castle	-	1
TOTAL	3,000	4,000

Further finance in the form of a First Mortgage Debenture Stock was also to be raised as a means of financing the business. It is noted that £35,000 of these monies had to be taken up prior to the proposed agreement proceeding. Clearly, this must have happened as the formation proceeded as planned. We unfortunately have no information about the Debenture holders, but assume they may have been the bankers to the business at that time.

Sidney Nash Castle, Sidney Castle Junior and Philip Castle were duly appointed directors of the Company.¹⁰

Not a great deal of information is available about events of the Company during the ten years up to 1904, however the reader is referred to the anecdotal stories from Gladys

Bromley set out below and it is evident that the business continued to operate on a viable and probably profitable basis. However, the number of ships acquired for breaking had substantially declined with only 13 ships acquired between 1894 and 1904 – see Chapter 10 Scale of Activities.

Childhood experiences at Castles by Mrs Bromley ¹¹

The following narrative was made available to us by Mr. Frederick Bromley, son of Gladys Bromley. We are privileged to be able to reproduce the finalised content as it provides an in depth feel to the activities at the yards and of the lifestyle experienced at that time between 1887 and 1905.

We have slightly edited the papers sent to us in order to better assist in their contribution to the understanding of life at Long's Wharf and at the Charlton Yard in the late 1800s, but especially at the former. This has mainly been done in the form of correlating the narrative so that the texts relating to specific points of interest are brought together. In addition, we have added some words in brackets to clarify and improve the accuracy of the text where our own knowledge justifies doing so. Otherwise, the narrative has been unaltered. It is a valuable and fascinating insight into this important location where the Castles shipbreaking operations were conducted.

Information from Mr. F. Bromley

My mother Miss Gladys Constance Perry, prior to her marriage, was the daughter of Charles Frederick Perry Manager of the Anchor & Hope Wharf, Charlton and Long's Wharf, Woolwich from 1885 to 1905. She was born at Long's Wharf on the 2nd July 1894 and died at Seabrook in January 1982 aged 87.

During her later years in the 1970's she used to tell me tales about her life at Long's Wharf as a child. I used to visit her on my way home from work and she would chat for a half an hour or so. During these chats I would write down notes on our conversation as she was talking. Eventually I wrote out all these conversations. Inevitably, there is some repetition and sometimes discrepancies.

Grandad Perry was keen on having photos taken at Long's Wharf and these are now lodged with the National Maritime Museum. My cousin Bill also supplied the NM Museum with his father's photographs of Long's Wharf.

During the Blitz of 1940/41 my brother James Bromley went along the Embankment and as he passed Baltic Wharf he saw some of the ships figureheads tossed about and lying in the road.

Castles by Mrs. Bromley

Castles had a small shipbreaking yard known as Anchor & Hope Wharf adjacent to the Anchor & Hope Pub in Charlton. [This was the Charlton Wharf site occupied by Castles since 1861 or earlier]. It was opposite Charlton Buoy.

The main Castles Yard, Long's Wharf, was in Harrington Road, Woolwich and the Parish Church for this district was St. Thomas's, Woodland Terrace, near Maryon Park. Long's Wharf was situated in St. Mary's Parish and St. Mary's Church was opposite the Woolwich Free Ferry. Long's Wharf was reached by walking from the Woolwich Road down Trinity Road (later re-named Warspite Road) to Harrington Street. Long's Wharf had the Royal Naval Dockyard on one side of it and Siemens, the German electrical firm, behind it on the other.

The Royal Naval Dockyard was surrounded by a massive wall built at the time of Nelson by French prisoners of war. Henry VIII's flagship the Henry Grace a Dieu was built and launched from here followed by many other famous warships. Mother said you could see the massive sloping slipway down to the River when you took a rowing boat out from Long's Wharf, as you couldn't see it from the land, and travelled along the River looking at the shoreline.

The river police wore long dark coats and a little dark peaked cap. They searched the river for floating dead bodies. The causeway was at the end of Harrington Street and steps led down to the river. Bodies were brought ashore here.

One of the ships broken up at Long's Wharf, Woolwich had a tiller or wheel inscribed 'Heavens Light is our Guide'.

Lord Bowater, Lord Mayor of London, was ground landlord of Harrington Road, Woolwich and the surrounding area. My mother thought Castles rented Longs Wharf from Bowater the paper firm. [This seems likely but the lease document has not been sighted].

Timber built ships to be broken up would be moored to Charlton Buoys where they would start to dismantle them in mid-stream. When the ships were light enough they were towed to Long's Wharf or Anchor & Hope Wharf and then broken up. William Watkins tugs brought the ships up to Charlton Buoys. The tugs were painted black with black funnels and a red band round the middle of the funnel.

They used to strip the copper sheeting off the hulls of the ships and weigh the sheets on scales when selling them. Many of the ships to be broken up still had the barrels of salt pork on board - and it used to stink.

Some of the wooden sailing ships broken up at the Wharf included the Swedish ship the VIMERA, the ALGIERS, one of Nelsons warships called THE PRESIDENT, the GRAMPIAN, the ALBION, the GLASGOW and the EUPHRATES, a training ship with one funnel was also broken up..

The figurehead on the GLASGOW wore a huge Tammy all carved in wood. The SIR WALTER RALEIGH was broken up and the figurehead went to a museum. These ships arrived at the Wharf with all their masts, spars, sails and full set of flags - Blue Peter, Yellow Jack etc. and figureheads. A huge mast taken off one of the ships was erected in Castle's Yard, Longs Wharf and flew the Castles Shipbreaking Yard flag. The warships still had all their guns on board. There is a photo of Uncle Syd sitting on his grandmother's knee in front of the Albion together with Grandfather Perry.

The Castle Shipbreaking Company at Long's Wharf next tackled their first ironclad warship HMS AJAX but the task was too formidable for them. They lost money on the ship because they lacked the technical knowledge and specialist equipment. Narrow iron steps led down into the AJAX which was dirty and greasy. She never steered properly. The Perry children were advised not to go on board by the workmen.

The old timber ship the WARSPITE used to be tied up at Charlton Buoys opposite Longs Wharf and used as a training ship. The boys from Barnardo's on board her were trained as seamen. They used to man her yards. The anchor from the WARSPITE was removed in 1901 and hung up in the yard at Long's Wharf. It was old and rusty looking.

They had a huge stack of teak at Long's Wharf, the biggest in England, from the ships broken up.

Between 1885 and 1905 the Thames came up level to Long's Wharf two or three times and they had to raise the height of the wharf to make it safe from flooding.

They used to make garden seats from the teak from the ships broken up at both Longs Wharf and Baltic Wharf.

Going down river to the Woolwich Free Ferry there were the Admiralty cable laying ships the MONARCH and the ALERT. They looked like private yachts, black with a gold band and white bridge. On the other side of the river at Silvertown, Henley's owned two small steam cable ships the GEISHA and the DAISHA and the Siemens cable laying steam ship was called the FARADAY.

From the Arsenal gates in Beresford Square to the Woolwich Free Ferry was known as Rope yard Rails, (sic) where they used to provide rope for the Navy. It was a rough, tough area too.

The Watchman at the Wharf was Bill Sorrell. He had long black hair and gold earrings and had served in windjammers. He used to bring his dinner in a wicker basket with a skewer through it. There was an epidemic of smallpox in the Woolwich and Charlton area and Bill Sorrell died of it aboard the hospital ship lying off Dartford, aged 70.

After Bill Sorrell died Charlie Carter became the night watchman. A little boy called Ernie Page lived near the Lord Hawick and he took the dinner down to Charlie but one day a piece of wood fell on the boy when he was playing about at the Wharf and the poor lad had a wooden leg after that accident. C.F. Perry was glad he was away when the accident happened.

Two men worked the long saws, Jimmy Marsh was the saw sharpener, he lived either in North or West Street. He was killed in 1905 when a huge beam fell on him. He worked in the saw sharpeners sheds. It had a ships galley, a little stove inside the shed with 3 or 4 rings to take saucepans. The men warmed up their mid-day meal on it. Their kids brought their mid-day food to the gate. Tommy Laurie worked at Long's Wharf making garden furniture from the teak of the ships timbers. He had been a ships carpenter.

Bill Clothier and Frank Bagot were the two Thames Lightermen who worked for Long's Wharf bringing barges (without sails) and lighters alongside and handling rowing boats.

Bill was fond of Fred Perry when he was a boy of 5 and Fred used to follow Bill everywhere. Once Bill climbed a rope ladder up a ship's side and mounted on deck. Fred followed him up the ladder but a dog appeared and wouldn't let Fred on board, barking at him. Fred shouted and shouted for Bill who eventually appeared and called the dog off. Fred's mother was watching this and was afraid Fred would fall off the rope ladder.

Bill Clothier lived in Trinity Street. Frank Bagot lived in Siemens Road. Both Frank and Bill wore gold earrings and they had to pass examinations to become Thames Lightermen.

At Baltic Wharf, where he was foreman, Tom Perry was nearly run over by a little steam crane and had to jump into a barge on the river to save his life. After that he walked badly from the fall.

There is a wonderful photo of all the men of Long's Wharf taken on their bean feast when they all went to Brighton for the day. Grandad is in the back row with a smile on his face. Castles used to pay for a bean feast for the men once a year. This was their only holiday. Charles Perry had to fix up lunch for them all at the Gloucester Hall Brighton. They all went by train. If they went into the country they used wagonettes, once to Wrotham, had a meal at a pub and picked blackberries to take back home.

Philip Castle of Henry Castle and Sons Ltd. was boss at Baltic Wharf while his brother Sidney was boss at Long's Wharf and Anchor & Hope Wharf. Sidney Castle told Uncle Syd that his grandfather [Henry Castle] founded the firm.

Philip Castle, one of the grandsons of Henry Castle was a better businessman than Sidney.

Mr. Spenser was a clerk at Castles Yard at Baltic Wharf. He came from his father's farm at Hereford. He was no relation [sic] and he lived to be over 90.

Sidney Nash Castle of Castles Shipbreaking Yard wore a top hat and sported a red gardenia. He lived at Richmond [Kingston upon Thames] and his house ran down to the River Thames. His son Sidney had a big house at Blackheath with a chef. He was fond of the ladies and his mistress Mrs Loader lived opposite Long's Wharf on the other side of the river at Silvertown. The Lodgers ran the margarine works at Silvertown. He bred fox terriers. He lost his only son Sidney in the Great War of 1914-18 but he had two [five] daughters.

Mr. Sidney Castle was an Edwardian character, who left all the work and management to his manager, mother's father, Charles Perry. Castle sometimes borrowed money off Charles Perry when he dropped in for a drink.

When Castles lost money on the AJAX Sidney Castle had to leave and he went to work at a big shipbreakers [Hughes Bolckow] at Newcastle on Tyne [Blyth]. In 1905, C.F. Perry with his family also had to leave the company and the manager's house. He took over a shop, post office and cafe with first floor parlour and living accommodation in Albion Road, Woolwich opposite the Lord Hawick.

Mr. Ball came from Devonport, the Admiralty sent him re the AJAX. The guns were sold for scrap iron. Mr. Pankhurst was sent from Chatham.

This is a most interesting anecdote and explains the origins of the entry of William Ball into the company and of the subsequent connections with Plymouth.

More Stories from Mrs. Bromley

Thomas Perry was born in December 1836 [father of C.F.Perry] at Monkton, Heathfield, outside Taunton, Somerset and his wife Miss Mary Poole was born in 1838 at Honiton in Devon.

Mr. Thomas Perry was foreman at the Castles Yard at Baltic Wharf, Grosvenor Road on the Embankment opposite the Tate Gallery where they did shipbreaking. Here they broke up HMS Bellerophen in 1894-1900. Mrs. Mary Perry got her husband the job at Castles before they were married.

Thomas Perry died of bronchitis aged 80 in June 1916 at his daughter's house (Lizzie Thompson) at 15 Imlinster Gardens, Clapham. His wife died of cancer aged 69 on September 20th or 21st 1907 also at 15 Imlinster Gardens, Clapham. They are buried at Nunhead Cemetery near Sydenham.

George Perry, son of Thomas and Mary Perry, was apprenticed to a cabinet maker by his mother. He lost two fingers in an accident and had to leave work. His mother bought him a coffee stall opposite Castles, Baltic Wharf but it was not a success.

Charles F. Perry and Family

Mothers father Charles F. Perry was born on the 6th November 1864 at Ponsonby Place off the Grosvenor Road near the Tate Gallery and baptised at Holy Trinity, Bessborough Gardens where he was in the choir as a little boy. He attended primary school at Holy Trinity Church School in Vauxhall Bridge Road. The Church was war damaged in the 1939-45 war and was used as a set for a film. Eventually the Church was demolished after the war and is now a car park and there is a garage on the site.

Charles F. Perry got a scholarship to the Greycoat School, Westminster and so did Harriet Smith. They knew each other from Kindergarten. After leaving school C.F. Perry was valet to Lord Lindsay. His mother Mary Perry, born Poole, got him the job. She was cook with Mrs. Nash. Mothers father C.F. Perry did not like the job and wanted something better so he left and went to the Army & Navy Stores near Victoria Station, possibly as a telephonist as he had good hearing and telephones had just been installed. He left aged 21 or 22 and went to Long's Wharf, Harrington Road, Woolwich at the Castles Shipbreaking Company as Manager [incorrect - Henry Castle & Sons Ltd.]

Charles F. Perry married Miss Harriet Smith. They married in 1884 at Holy Trinity Church, Bessborough Gardens. After their marriage they lived at Fentimans Road with Mr. & Mrs. Woodward and had rooms not far from Bessborough Gardens. Cousin Florrie and Fred Foster had rooms in the same road. They then moved to Castles Yard, Harrington Road, Woolwich when Syd was 12 months old in 1886. He was Manager of Long's Wharf for 19 years from 1885/6 -1905 and they had four children. Sydney, Dorothy, Gladys Constance and Frederick Charles.

Charles F. Perry and Harriet Smith married at St. Botolphs Church, Bloomsbury, London.

All the Perrys' attended Holy Trinity Church, Bessborough Gardens, Pimlico, opposite Thomas and Mary Perry's house at 38 Bessborough Gardens. Harriet lived at Ponsonby Place prior to marriage. Their eldest children Sidney and Dorothy were born at Ponsonby Place. Gladys and Fred Perry were born at Long's Wharf. All four children where christened at Holy Trinity.

Grandad C.F. Perry was manager of Long's Wharf and Anchor & Hope from 1885/6 - 1905. He spent hours at the wharf side checking barges and lighters in and out. He had to because of stealing and fiddling and he trusted no one else to do it. So he spent hours by the riverside in all weathers including the famous London pea soup fogs. He became subject to bronchitis and suffered with his chest. Doctor Berry told him to grow a beard to protect his chest. He used to sit in his house at Long's Wharf, in his office, making out lists and details of timber sold which where sent daily to Castles Head Office at Baltic Wharf.



As manager he had a 3-bed house at the wharf and he managed Long's Wharf for 19 years. His wage was £2.10s. per week and he had free lighting, free fuel and no rent. They had a man (Joe Carter whose father was Charlie Carter) to do odd jobs, clean the windows and take the children to school. He scrubbed the kitchen floor before breakfast each morning and swept the yard. A women did the bedrooms and the

washing every other week. Father said his own job was worth £5 per week all in. The house was painted and papered once a year to try to avoid the bugs from the ships timbers. This was done during the family's fortnight summer holidays at Brighton, Hastings or Folkestone.

Mrs. King was washerwoman at Charles and Harriet Perrys house at Long's Wharf. One week she washed the laundry at the house and the next week she took it away. C. Perry gave her logs from the wharf for her copper. If C. Perry was giving a dinner party she would cook the meal at night.

Mrs. & Mrs. Riley, Mr. & Mrs. Thompson, Charles and Harriet Perry would eat the meal in the office in their house since it was bigger than the dining room. Mr. Thompson supplied oil for the belle boats and Mr. Riley was a store keeper in Woolwich Arsenal and lived in Kimbeach Gardens, Charlton. The Thompsons lived in Victoria Road, Charlton near Charlton railway station.

Dad bought a plot of land at Abbey Wood in the country and they built a cabin on it. Charles Perry was friendly with a Mr. Garrett a nice old boy who had a wagonette and used to take Charles and family to their pavilion at Abbey Wood. The pavilion was built of teak from the ship's timbers at Long's Wharf, Woolwich. The windows also came of the ships timbers as did the seats and trestles. All the timber was painted. They had a large hamper with crockery and plates for their picnics, a pump off one of the ships pumped up a supply of water from a well. Doctor Berry a friend of C. Perry analysed the water and declared it was purer than water from the taps at Long's Wharf.

All the family much enjoyed visiting Abbey Wood sometimes they travelled down from Long's Wharf by train and sometimes one of C. Perry's friends would supply a wagonette and horses. The wagonette had no upholstery and you sat facing each other, it had three seats on each side making six passengers in all plus Jack at the reins. You shook and rolled about and you were very uncomfortable. Sometimes you were hauled by four horses. The land and pavilion were sold for £100 when C. Perry and family left Long's Wharf and moved to the shop. Gladys and Harriet Perry saw the pavilion in 1926 for the last time as they travelled by train to Tilbury en route for the Moreton Bay and the voyage to Sydney, Australia.

Charles F. Perry was very musical and played the violin, the banjo and the piano. He liked the violin best of all. Also, he was in a choir and once sang at a Masonic Dinner at the Savoy Hotel. He used to talk of his uncle William Perry (he may have been his great uncle) who lived to be 108. All the Perrys were proud of William. C.F. Perry's wife Harriet also played the piano. C.F. Perry was also a member of the Saint George's Glee Club, Westminster a choral society. Here he met Mr. Charles Knight a fellow member. Mrs. Dora Knight became very friendly with C.F. Perry's wife Harriet and came to visit them at Longs Wharf every Monday afternoon from her home across the river in North Woolwich.

Mr. Davis kept a little pub called the Derby Arms. It was only a beer house so Charles Perry preferred the Lord Hawick. Both were in the vicinity of Longs Wharf. The Lord Hawick sold Meaux Beers.

Her father - C.F. Perry - was friendly with Mr. & Mrs. Sanders who kept the 'Lord Hawick', Woolwich Road. Granddad was executor for Mr. Sanders when he died and Mrs. Sanders said she would leave grandad £100 in her will. Mother thinks she was rather sweet on him. When she died grandad was her executor but no £100. Her cook introduced two nieces as barmaids who helped themselves to the till. Charles and Harriet Perry were old friends of Bill Bigwood who owned and operated a bakery in the Woolwich Road.

Sakers was a job master, hiring out horse drawn brakes. He was a greengrocer in Albion Hill along the Woolwich Road from the Lord Hawick public house. C.F. Perry used to hire his brakes from Sanders at the back of the Lord Hawick since he was nearer to Long's Wharf than the other job masters. Joy Saker went to school with Gladys Perry at Maryon Park School and they were in the same class. Ted Saker was drowned at sea working for Siemens.

Charles Frederick Perry liked teak as a good solid wood and oak because it was British. He always wanted a British oak coffin. Tommy Lorrie, a ships carpenter, made an oak stool for Mary Perry at Bessborough Gardens and one for Harriet Perry at Long's Wharf. The EIDER a P. & O. boat went down off the Needles and the red plush came off it.

Syd Perry was always bringing stuff back to the house at Long's Wharf off the ships being broken up. His mother used to say to him 'more rubbish'. Syd Perry brought home a big china container and they put their brollies in it. Gladys Perry liked a picture off a Norwegian barque called Lonelie with verses in English. Her mother put it in a shed in case it was bug infested off the ship it had come from.

Two green claret glasses and two white champagne glasses which belonged to Charles and Harriet Perry came from the EIDER. Presumably the ship was salvaged and broken up at Long's Wharf. The EIDER sank before Gladys Perry was born in 1894. The EIDER was built in 1847 by R & H Green.

In 1904 C.F. Perry took his family for a trip on the yacht Valetta owned by a friend Georgie Hall, landlord of the Mortar Hotel in Plumstead Road, Woolwich opposite Woolwich Arsenal. They were both in the same Masonic Lodge, Nelson Lodge, Woolwich. Mr. Thompson of Nelson Lodge supplied the oil for the Belle Boats.

Those who travelled on the Valetta, C. Perry, his wife Harriet, their four children, Fred, Gladys, Syd and Dora, Kenneth Gilbertson and his sister Elsie plus the crew of two. The crew slept in the focsle. Charles Perry, Syd and Ken slept in the saloon which had two bunks while one slept on the floor. The rest slept in the cabins. They sailed from Erith to travel to Canvey Island. On reaching the Nore Lightship they encountered a bad squall. Harriet was a bad sailor and was sea sick all the time. She insisted on sailing however saying 'if we go down we all go down together'.

Gladys and Charles and probably Dora were all right and ate a good breakfast of kippers and haddock cooked on a little oil stove by the crew. Most of the others ate no breakfast. Gladys said she didn't know if her father was nervous in the rough seas but he kept taking little nips. On arrival at Canvey Island, they repaired to a little pub called The Lobster Snack. There was a bigger hotel called the Kynoch Hotel. Charles Perry slipped the crew two golden sovereigns on their safe arrival.

The Belle Boats were paddle steamers which operated pleasure trips from Woolwich to Margate. They included the LONDON BELLE, SOUTHWOLD BELLE and the ROYAL SOVEREIGN. Harriet Perry, her daughter Gladys and two grandsons Fred and Jim were taken on a trip from Woolwich to Margate for a day. Jessie Perry looked after the little girl Betty Bromley. It rained all day so the party spent their time in Margate looking at the shops.

After C.F. Perry left Castles in 1905 the family moved from Long's Wharf to a shop. They could not afford a holiday so Mrs. Dora Knight offered to take Gladys Perry who was then 11 years old to stay with her for a holiday at Pelham Road, Gravesend.

They bought the Sub Post office at 54 Albion Road, Woolwich in 1905 after leaving Long's Wharf. They were swindled over it. A coal yard at the back to go with the business had been sold off. Old Lewis and his wife who were in the Post Office used to be a jailer on a prison hulk at Woolwich and walked with a limp. His maid said he was a bully and his wife was scared of him. He had two daughters Julia who was tall like him and Hannah. He rented the restaurant, shop, sub-post office and house to Charles Perry in 1905. He told Charles there was a ground rent from the coal yard but this was untrue.

After two years the business was failing and mother's father got pleurisy and pneumonia. He never really got over it. C.F. Perry's daughter Dorothy ran the Post Office while his wife and daughter Gladys ran the cafe. In 1907 C.F. Perry went to watch a football match at Charlton's Ground, caught a chill and died aged 43 on 7th October 1907. His family did a moonlight flit to Thomas and Mary Perry's at Bessborough Gardens, Pimlico - Charles' parent's house.

The foregoing anecdotes illustrate vividly the lifestyle and happenings at Long's Wharf, Woolwich between 1885 and 1905.

There is no evidence up to the beginning of 1904 that the company was experiencing any particular financial problems at least not severe enough to warrant impending insolvency. However at this point the decision to proceed with the purchase of the *Duke of Wellington*, the *Hannibal* and *Anson/Algiers* and *Edgar* appeared to follow similar lines to past purchases where the ships were purchased by private treaty. On this occasion however the monies to purchase the foregoing were provided by J. B. Garnham by way of a Debenture secured on the assets of the Company¹² The full purchase price of £27,300 was provided through this arrangement and indicates that Henry Castle & Sons Ltd did not have the money at that time to make the purchase without resort to external borrowing. The date of these purchases was 12th April 1904. It is also noted that contracts for the sale of metals had also been entered into with J. B. Garnham and a firm in Glasgow J. & A. Walker for the sale of Wrought and Cast Iron.¹³

Earlier in March 1904 the Company had also entered into a contract to break up the *Ajax* on a price basis calculated as a commission related to the cost of labour plus a percentage calculated on the sales proceeds.

On the face of it there should not have been any major difficulty experienced on this contract but anecdotal evidence from Gladys Bromley (see above) suggests that major difficulties were being experienced and the costs of breaking up this type of armoured battleship were under-estimated by the Company in a major way. It is believed that the Company did not have the right type of equipment for this operation and were using tools and methods suited to the wood built vessels. Accordingly, losses accumulated very quickly and by July 1904 Sidney Nash Castle was attempting to raise further capital by the sale of his holding of 3,000 Preference shares in the Company - see letter and prospectus below.¹⁴

HENRY CASTLE & SONS, LIMITED
Baltic Wharf,
Millbank, Westminster, S.W.

July 2nd 1904

At the formation of this Company, in 1894, I received for the sale to it of my business of HENRY CASTLE & SONS, amongst other things, 3,000 Preference Shares of £10 each, entitled to a fixed cumulative preferential dividend at the rate of 6 per cent, per annum, and to rank, both as regards dividends and capital, in priority to the Ordinary Shares.

I have hitherto not parted with any of these shares, but I now desire to do so with the view of supplying the Company with further Capital.

The dividend on these Shares has always been paid.

The Company is now fully employed with the breaking up of old ships of the Navy. Such work in hand now comprises:-

H.M.S. "AJAX" an Iron Armour Plated Screw Battle Ship, built in 1880, at a cost of over £500,000. (This is being carried out by the Company, on the Admiralty's behalf, on terms which give the Company a commission on money paid out for labour and a percentage of the proceeds of Sale.)

*The Wood Screw Liners
DUKE OF WELLINGTON, about 3,750 tons
ALGIERS about 3,340 tons
EDGAR about 3,100 tons
HANNIBAL about 3,100 tons*

The purchase money for the last-named four vessels was £27,300.

To carry out this volume of work more capital is naturally required, and as the Company's Debenture Holders are already interested in the business, I have decided to give them the first opportunity of acquiring some of these shares as an investment.

I shall be obliged if you will indicate in the enclosed form what number you require.

A payment of 10 per cent. on the amount of the purchase money should be sent with the enclosed form, and the balance on or before 30th September next, or, if desired, it can be paid up at once.

Shares bought will be entitled to dividend as from 1st July 1904.

The following information is given in case this document should be a Prospectus within the meaning of the Companies Act, 1900:-

£3,000 Cumulative 6 per cent. Preference Shares of £10 each and 3,993 Ordinary Shares of £10 each in the Capital of the Company were issued to me as fully paid up as part of the consideration for the

sale by me to the Company of the business now being carried on by the Company. The remaining 7 Ordinary Shares were allotted to the Signatories to the Memorandum of Association of the Company.

I was the Vendor of the business to the Company.

The amount payable to me as Vendor under the Contract of Sale of such business was £80,000, made up as follows:-

- £10,000 in Cash
- £30,000 in fully paid Preference Shares; of the Company and
- £40,000 in fully paid Ordinary Shares of the Company

(of which £15,000 was for goodwill), the Company, in addition, satisfying all obligations in connection with the business.

The following are the dates of and parties to what may possibly be regarded as Material Contracts which have been made by the Company during the last two years:-

CONTRACTS

Contract, dated 2nd March, 1904, and made between the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty of the one part, and HENRY CASTLE & SONS, LIMITED, of the other part, for breaking up H.M.S. "AJAX" on behalf of the Admiralty.

Contract, dated 12th April, 1904, and made between HENRY CASTLE & SONS, LIMITED, of the one part, and Messrs. FULLER, HORSEY & Co. (for and on behalf of the Admiralty), of the other part, for the purchase of four Wooden Screw Line of Battleships, for the total purchase money of £27,300.

Contract, dated 27th April 1904, and made between HENRY CASTLE & SONS LIMITED, of the one part, and J.B. GARNHAM, Metal Merchant, of 132, Upper Thames Street, of the other part, for the Sale of the Copper and Metal arising from the four ships named above.

Two Contracts, dated respectively, 15th April and 9th May, 1904, and made between HENRY CASTLE & SONS LIMITED, of the one part, and J. & A. WALKER, of Glasgow, of the other part, for the sale to them of the Wrought and Cast Iron, & C., arising from the four wooden ships named above.

Contract, dated 28th June 1904, and made between HENRY CASTLE & SONS, LIMITED, of the one part, and the said J.B. GARNHAM of the other part, for the Sale of Ship's Plates and other Iron arising from the breaking up of H.M.S. "Ajax".

The above Contracts can be seen at the Company's Works, Baltic Wharf, Millbank, any day between the hours of 11 and 4.

Yours faithfully,
Sidney N. Castle

FORM FOR REPLY

Date.....1904

To SIDNEY NASH CASTLE, Esq, J.P.
Baltic Wharf,
Millbank, Westminster, S.W.

In reply to your Circular, dated _____ I agree to purchase from you _____ of the Six per Cent. Cumulative £10 Preference Shares of HENRY CASTLE & SONS, LIMITED, referred to therein, and I herewith enclose cheque for £ _____ being 10 per cent, deposit on the purchase money, and I agree to pay the balance on or before the 30th day of September, 1904.

N.B. The balance can be paid at once if desired.

Signature.....
Address.....

An examination of the events outlined in the above documents clearly illustrates what happened to the company's fortunes and explains the sudden decline and its ultimate bankruptcy.

Unfortunately, no such funds were forthcoming from the above fund raising efforts and Garnham and Walker were obviously not prepared to put up further monies by acquiring the Preference Shares. It is not quite clear what Sidney intended to do here as the sale of the Preference Shares would have transferred money to him personally and he must therefore have intended to lend back the proceeds to the Company otherwise the Company's working capital would not have increased. As far as we know there were no unissued Preference Shares in the Company. Consequently, the business struggled on until nearer the end of the year and on 14th December 1904 the Company was placed into Liquidation - see below. The appointment of a Liquidator implies that the continuance of trade was not deemed viable at that time and that the position was therefore considered terminal otherwise a Receiver would have been appointed by the Debenture holders.

Sidney Nash Castle also subsequently became bankrupt at this time as well¹⁵ and although we do not have copies of the accounts of the Company available for inspection it does seem strange that Sidney became personally bankrupt in view of the fact that limited liability was in place to protect the shareholders. Neither of the two sons Sidney and Philip or any other shareholder became bankrupt so it can only mean that Sidney Nash alone was involved in providing personal guarantees to a bank or other creditor and probably had also advanced significant sums of his own money to the Company. Clearly, all was to no avail and the Company ultimately failed.

THE LONDON GAZETTE, DECEMBER 16, 1904.

*In the Matter of HENRY CASTLE AND SONS Limited.
At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the above named Company,
duly convened, and held at Baltic Wharf, Millbank, in the county of
London, on the 14th day of December, 1904, the following Extraordinary
Resolution was duly passed:—*

*That it has been proved to the satisfaction of this Meeting that the
Company cannot, by reason of its liabilities, continue its business,
and that it is advisable to wind up the same, and accordingly that
the Company be wound up voluntarily; and that Mr. Tansley Witt,
F.C.A., of 40, Chancery-lane, W.C., be and is hereby appointed
Liquidator for the purposes of such winding up.*

Dated this 14th day of December, 1904.

SIDNEY N. CASTLE, Chairman.

Sidney Nash Castle 1838 - 1910

From all the accounts available Sidney Nash was an enterprising man, who had been taught well the skills of the shipbreaking business right from the start of the era of the Castle family's greatest achievements from 1860. When his father teamed up with W.P. Beech, he wisely brought two of his own sons into partnership with him at that exciting time. Sidney was not the eldest son and we have to assume that he was selected by his father because of his suitability to the trade. Of course, Abercrombie was also brought into the business at the same time but as the younger of the two his interest seemed to have subsequently waned and he pulled out of the partnership in 1877 as previously described. He subsequently became a wine merchant. Nothing further is known about him except that he became bankrupt in 1894. He died in 1907.

Generally Sidney must have been a good business man and was clearly well connected with the Admiralty as his subsequent claims made clear - see claim made above in 1885. This implied a pleasant personality and an astute business brain. The only major mistake occurred at the end of his career when the firm became bankrupt in 1904 and Sidney himself was personally declared bankrupt soon afterwards.¹⁵ By the time of his death in

1910 he was still living at his home in Kingston and was a leading citizen in the community. He was a member of the Borough Bench from 1883. He was also a member of the Town Council for a number of years and was instrumental in implementing substantial improvements to the river frontage, which had become very dilapidated. We understand he was invited to become Mayor on a number of occasions but declined owing to heavy business commitments.¹⁶

Sidney was married to Helen Downey daughter of the well-known barge owner family whose premises were located on the other side of the Thames from Baltic Wharf. We know that Castles were also barge owners and the Downey family link may have been a good connection in this field of activity. Unfortunately, we have very little information about the barge ownership, building and breaking of these types of vessels by the Company, although they are recorded as barge owners in 1916 and 1926 as indicated by the Company's balance sheets.



SIDNEY NASH CASTLE & HELEN DOWNEY
Castles Archives

Sidney lived at Baltic Wharf until about 1873 and he lived in various parts of central London thereafter including Ponsonby Street, nearby the Yard, before moving to Kingston where his house, Woodbines a fine old mansion, was located at the junction of Surbiton Road and Portsmouth Road, where he died at the age of 72 in 1910.



SIDNEY NASH CASTLE
Castles Archives

He was an active supporter of Kingston Rowing Club, however we have no record of his own rowing activity in earlier life. He was also a keen supporter of Surbiton Cricket Club where his own son Sidney achieved prominence in the 1890s. Mr & Mrs Castle were regular attendees at the Parish church and both he and his family were very prominent on social occasions.¹⁶

According to family information Sidney Nash was also the owner of an art collection, which attracted a great deal of local attention, however there is no record of what happened to this valuable collection, although one assumes its disposal at the time of his bankruptcy may have enabled him to raise substantial funds.

From the account given by Gladys Bromley Sidney was always smartly dressed and sporting a flower in his suit buttonhole.

Very little is heard of Sidney from 1904 until his death, but he must have been involved behind the scenes in helping to rebuild the fortunes of the company in its new guise as Castles Shipbreaking Limited. Indeed he was a gentleman, a rare character to behold and was sadly missed.

This concludes our narrative for the period up to 1904 and we continue in Chapter 7 with the outcome of the bankruptcy and the subsequent rebirth of the shipbreaking business in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 6 - REFERENCES

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