

**THE MAKING OF BRICKS BY  
THE PRITCHETT FAMILY,  
1798 to 1939.**

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**PREFACE.**

The desire of the writer of this narrative of Brick and Tile-making by six consecutive generations of the Pritchett family is mainly to place on record an interesting account of an industry which perhaps can claim to date back almost to the very beginning of man's recorded occupation of this planet. To quote but one well-known Scriptural record in support of this statement, one has only to mention the building of the Tower of Babel, as recorded in the book of Genesis, with Bricks which had been thoroughly burnt.

Another well-known example of the use of Bricks in very remote ages is in the discovery in the Egypt of the tomb of the mother of Cheops, the builder of the Great Pyramid some 5000 years ago. It is stated that her burying place was covered with a brick arch which has withstood the ravages of many centuries and proclaims the lasting value of bricks.

The reader will observe the wonderful progress in the various processes employed during the period of 140 years, whilst bearing in mind that before the commencement of these events there seems to have been scarcely any change during many centuries, apart from one detail, that almost from this date coal was universally used to burn the kilns. Previously, right back into obscurity, wood was the only available fuel in every part of the world however, great numbers of bricks have been burnt without kilns, by adding ashes, etc., to the clay when being prepared.

In Oriental countries having an almost dry atmosphere bricks have from time immemorial been made by being sun dried only.

## **THE MAKING OF BRICKS BY PRITCHETT FAMILY, 1798 to 1939.**

The first chapter of this interesting record of the making of Bricks and Tiles by the Pritchett family commences in the year 1798, when one ---- Pritchett, accompanied by his son George, then a boy of early years, came from the mainland to near Newport, Isle of Wight, to assist in making a large quantity of Rebate Tiles (used to cover the exterior walls of somewhat temporary erections of timber, and in appearance exactly resemble bricks). These were required to build the first Parkhurst Barracks, near Newport, I.W., and were made and burnt at Mackintosh Hill, near the entrance to Kitbridge Farm, where the shallow clay pits can still be easily traced.

After the completion of this work we do not hear of the movement's of the elder Pritchett until we have a record of his death some years later, which will be referred to subsequently.

We now open another chapter of this narrative, referring to George Pritchett, by now a young man, located at Berelay Brickyard at Niton, repeating his own words. Describing a somewhat unusual incident of the industry, he said "My people at Berelay received an urgent request from a Cowes brickyard, whose proprietor was taken ill, asking that some suitable person be kindly sent over to Cowes to undertake the burning of the last kiln of bricks for that season, in the late autumn, for the sick fellow brickmaker."

The young man entrusted with this responsible task was George Pritchett himself and after walking from Berelay to Cowes, a journey of 10 miles or more, he carried out the burning of the kiln, a most arduous task, and returned to his home.

We have only a somewhat vague description of the site of this brickyard, but George Pritchett describes it as situated at the back of Cowes, and from a careful survey I think we may locate this yard at Baring Road, just before reaching Egypt Hill. The house "Kiln Cottage" still stands to mark the home of this fellow brickmaker, whilst the clay pits on the east side of the road, which are now enclosed by the Park stone wall, are clearly discernible and will establish beyond much doubt that this was the site on which the youthful George fulfilled his errand of goodwill so long ago. This is the last we hear of him at Berelay, about the year 1805. The reader will observe that the then brickyard and house at Berelay were situated on the east side of the main road. The ruins of the kiln are still clearly seen; the present brickyard, opened much later, is on the west side of the highway.

Our next chapter commences at Ningwood, where we find George Pritchett, by this time a middle-aged man, carrying on a successful business at the yard still easily discernible by its well built house, its brick-built entrance wall, and the old clay pits, from which a very considerable quantity of clay has been taken, indicating the extent to which the business had grown. George Pritchett married one Nancy Hallett, of Warlands Farm, a place destined during subsequent years to be the scene of several important events in the family history; to them were born two sons and two daughters.

Here at Ningwood Brickyard, about the period 1830 to 1840, George Pritchett appears to have built up and carried on a most successful business. His well known "White Bricks" were much in demand, not only for Island buildings, but were taken by road to Yarmouth Quay, shipped to Shoreham Harbour, and again carried by road to Brighton for use in the early buildings of that now well known and popular seaside resort. We learn also that the

first machine to arrive in the Island to make the agricultural pipes came to the Ningwood yard. They had previously been made by hand moulding in two separate parts, and were known then as Horseshoe train pipes and tiles.

Yet another instance of the demand for his goods may be mentioned. During the erection of the first prison built in the Island, now gone, at Horsebridge Hill, near Newport, bricks from the Ningwood Yard were utilised.

By this time the transport of the goods produced, and the bringing of the coal from the Yarmouth Quay to be used to burn the kilns, had reached such dimensions as to be a constant source of anxiety owing to the necessity of hiring, horses and wagons from nearby farmers when needed. The problem was ultimately satisfactorily solved, as described in the following chapter.

We now find that the elder son, Edmund, had reached the age of 19 years and was about to marry Elizabeth Long, the daughter of John Long, of Bonchurch, where she was born, but owing to the early death of her father, at the age of 44 years, Elizabeth was brought up and received her education under the care of her uncle, who was an officer in the Army and lived at Span Farm, Wroxall. The fact of being brought up under such conditions enabled her to pay visits as she grew older, among others to her friends at Warlands Farm, Shalfleet, where she met Edmund Pritchett of the nearby brickyard, to whom at the age of 18 years she was married.

The father, George Pritchett, at this juncture took over also the tenancy of Eades Farm, Newbridge, and here his son Edmund, with his wife Elizabeth, made their home and undertook the management and working of the farm. This soon led to the possession of a very fine and well-trained team of horses. These were in part, to cultivate the farmland, but, still more important, they also carried out a large amount of the transport duties of the brickyard, a fact that materially enhanced the personal aspect of the family business. Before leaving this farm connection one incident of interest is recorded. The youthful Edmund had trained his Eades Farm team of fine horses so well that after taking their load of 1000 bricks in the wagon from the Brickyard at Ningwood to the prison building at Horsebridge Hill, near Newport, a distance of several miles, the Eades Farm horses were the only team that could draw this heavy load of bricks from the road across the intervening soft field to the prison site. Other teams of horses persisting in with the carting of bricks had in every case to unload half their bricks at the roadside and make two journeys across the soft land in order to deliver each 1000.

And now at Eades Farm, Newbridge, another chapter dawns, destined to perpetuate the family industry of Brickmaking, as on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1836, their first child, William Pritchett, was born, and during the next 10 years, whilst Edmund Pritchett resided at Eades Farm, another son, Frank, and three daughters were added to the family.

But to return for a while to the Ningwood Brickyard. During these eventful years the, brickmaking business had reached a high reputation for that period, as the Ningwood White Bricks set a standard of quality which succeeding generations of the family have each in turn endeavoured to maintain, and still cherish as a family ambition to this day.

At about this period we learn of the death of the elder Pritchett, referred to in our opening chapter. Now an old man, and living, as far as can be ascertained, near Salisbury, he came on a journey to Ningwood in order to visit his son George and his daughter, who was the wife of the foreman of the Exbury (Hants) Brickyard, but here illness overtook this veteran of the family and he died here, and was buried at the Parish Churchyard at Exbury. Again we must return to Eades Farm, Newbridge, as after 10 years' association with the family business Edmund Pritchett severed his connection there and moves on to Cowes, taking over, the management of Shamblers Brickyard, where he remained with his then increasing family for several years. Whilst here his two elder sons, William and Frank,

commenced their early association with the family business of brickmaking, and in particular took up the transport of bricks by lighter on the Medina river, as well as assisting with the burning of the kilns, which necessitated continuous attendance on the furnaces throughout the nights as well as the days during these arduous periodical operations.

It was whilst so engaged upon this nocturnal task that a most amusing incident occurred, attended with financial amendment, which perhaps may be mentioned if only to brighten this seemingly uneventful narrative. Frank, the second son, was taking duty for this particular night at the burning kiln, and, to record his own words, as dawn began to conclude his long night of abstinence he recalled with some degree of increasing interest the fact that he had on the previous day observed his mother making a rhubarb pie for the, by now, large family of his brother and sisters for the morrow. The urge for an earlier opportunity of sharing this desirable delicacy appears to have completely subordinated his higher instincts, for, as he confessed, he crept silently into the home, close to the kilns, secured the pie, and retreated to a secluded position near his kiln, devoured the contents and then, as if to celebrate his ill-advised action, paraded around the kiln with the now empty dish on his head. At this, moment his mother, prompted by maternal instincts, looked from the window to see if all was well with her son at the kiln, but was shocked to see her beloved son under the circumstances described. History only records that very definite instructions were given to the offending son to hasten into the town and restore at his own expense the necessary fruit to replenish the family larder.

Edmund Pritchett and his family remained at Shamblers Brickyard at Cowes for several years. During this time considerable interest was being aroused in the neighbourhood by the news that a building estate was about to be opened up at the village of Gurnard, just to the west of Cowes. Naturally, the brickmaker was attracted to see if circumstances permitted the opening, of a brickyard in the locality, as in those days the very limited scope of the horse drawn vehicle used for transport purposes made it desirable to open a yard in any place which appeared to have prospects of sufficient local support. Again, the fact of a brickyard being opened nearby obviously induced intending interested parties to go ahead with their schemes, as a supply of bricks so conveniently produced was in itself often a deciding factor.

However, about the year 1850 Edmund Pritchett, at the very commencement of the opening up of the Gurnard Building Estate, himself purchased the first plot of land immediately forming the entrance from the main road on to the estate, where no doubt he had previously satisfied himself that suitable material was fortunately to be obtained, and here he built himself a kiln, commenced the manufacture of bricks without delay, and himself erected a house on the land for the family, which seemed to complete an ideal condition. He named the yard "Elim" Brickyard, as he himself was a sincere and enthusiastic Nonconformist and a local preacher of no mean repute, a fact that must have considerable prominence. With the untiring support of his wife Elizabeth they brought up their large family of 10 sons and daughters in a God fearing manner and as hard-working, men and women, a lofty principle that continued to dominate their lives as they grew up and spread abroad in various directions, as can easily be observed down to the present day. Whilst here his youngest son George was born, and in due course also entered the family industry of brick and tile making.

We must now return for a while to Ningwood and record the closing chapters of that famous brickyard of its day. George Pritchett had by this time decided to somewhat relax his ambitious life at the brickyard, and to that end he transferred his home and, to some extent, his interests also to the farm at Eades, which his son had recently vacated when going to Cowes. Here he spent the next few years of his life, during which his advancing

age ultimately influenced him to retire from the scene of his greatest achievement as a most successful propriety or of the Ningwood Brickyard.<sup>13</sup> George Pritchett ultimately gave up his farming interests as well, and concluded the tenancy of Eades Farm.

We now learn that in order to be nearer his son Edmund and his family he removed a part of his cattle and farm implements and settled down at Little Cockleton Farm, near Gurnard where he enjoyed a period of semi-retirement. When advancing years further restricted his scope of activity he severed his business interests here and took up his residence at the stone cottages in Newport Road, just at the entrance to Cowes, known as the "Hole-in-the-Hedge," where we learn that he suffered the loss of his wife and laid her to rest in the Cemetery then recently opened just a little way further distant from Cowes.

This resulted in his giving up the home there, and he removed to Rew Street Farm, where his daughter and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Rice, were carrying on the farm.

Although advanced in years, it is recorded that he again opened another brickyard on the lower part of Gurnard Farm, close to the stream of water that continues across the marsh into the Solent, and for a while enjoyed his lifelong occupation. His grandson William, of whom we shall hear more later, also took part in this venture, as he himself relates an amusing incident which transpired there in connection with the burning of the kiln. It appears that George Pritchett undertook the firing of the kiln during the hours of the day, and his grandson William continued the task throughout the night. At the pre-arranged hour of tea-time they changed over, George Pritchett having completely exhausted his patience during the day with a type of kiln of which he had no previous experience. This resulted in overburning a part of the bricks and completely blocking up some of the furnaces. He confessed his failure to his grandson as they changed over with the remark "I have 'done in' two of them; good night to you," a fact that became only too obvious as the grandson inspected the furnaces, on taking over duty, and found to his dismay that much harm had been done during the day. We do not hear any more of the doings of this brickyard, which seems to have had only a short term of usefulness.

The closing chapter of the life of George Pritchett, spent from very youthful age as a boy at Mackintosh Hill Brickyard, near Newport, right up to the last chapter now being recorded at Gurnard, is one full of achievement. As his days grew shorter he once more left Rew Street Farm and took up his residence at a cottage immediately near the Gurnard (old) Church and helped his son Edmund in the by now growing business at Gurnard

He died at this cottage about the year 1860 and was also buried at Cowes Cemetery with his wife. So closed a life whose very sincerity and achievement prompted those of succeeding generations of his family to give also their best to carry still further the honour and success to which his life was so nobly devoted.

Edmund Pritchett now becomes the direct line of descent of this family of brickmaker, and to his life we must record also a long trail of activity in perhaps an unusually large number of places to which his adventurous character destined him to proceed. He had not long commenced his business at Elim Brickyard when an inquiry for a supply of brick from the contractor who was erecting one of the forts at Freshwater prompted him to open a second brickyard at Gurnard, immediately at the end of the main road adjoining the Solent, where a most suitable yard was commenced. He called it "Jordan Brickyard" as it was bounded on the east side by a tributary stream running into the sea, which provided water for use in the preparation of the clay. A suitable quay was built, and we learn that a very successful business was also carried on here, the bricks being shipped and taken to the Freshwater fortifications, an ideal arrangement

By this time we must give more prominence to the eldest son William, as by now he, too, contemplated making a home for himself, and we learn that he built a very nice house from their own bricks etc., immediately adjoining the Jordan Brickyard.

**15** In due course he married one Caroline Fisher, of Cowes, and to them here was born a son, William Edward, and a daughter, Margaret, the latter surviving only some four years, ill-health closing this short life.

Frank Pritchett, the second son, who gained notoriety at Shamblers Brickyard, also built himself a house as well close by, and married Susan Joyce, a lady from Dorset, and he, too, continued to exploit the family heritage both at Gurnard and Chandlers Ford, near Eastleigh, Hampshire, after which he transferred his life's work to Allbrook, and here with his wife and numerous family he spent all the years of his life in an atmosphere of success and, above all, in a devout Christian life.

But to return to Gurnard, Edmund Pritchett and his family, with their brickmaking activities, occasionally visited by the grandparent George Pritchett. The reader will easily visualize here a happy family of three generations, with the younger brothers and sisters at the two brickyards, Elim and Jordan, and one's mind is easily taken back to similar conditions and places in Egypt, where even in remote days the very same interests are recorded in Holy writ.

By the year 1856 we are introduced to another sphere of later activity, Hillis, near Marks Corner. At this date a Government order was issued to drain all agricultural land to make the soil more productive, and to this end the Ward Estate, which embraced a large tract of land extending from Cowes to Freshwater, caused a yard to be opened at Hillis for the manufacture of these field drain pipes on a scale sufficiently large to drain all their lands, and we learn that Edmund Pritchett, of Gurnard, was invited by the Estate Steward to advise and open up the Pipe-making industry on their behalf. This step having been taken, we now must bring his eldest son William, from Gurnard, into prominence, as he was duly appointed to manage the Hillis Pipe Yard, and continued to make a very large quantity of these pipes for the next 10 years, when the work of draining the Estate **16** was completed, after which the yard was placed on the market "to let" As there was no applicant forthcoming, the Steward invited William Pritchett to take the tenancy himself, which offer he duly accepted, and from that time in the year 1866 William Pritchett commenced what proved later to be a long and successful association with the family industry of brickmaking, which will be given in future chapters. But before passing on we must record a personal chapter. During this period, soon after taking over the management of the Hillis Yard, he disposed of his house at Gurnard and brought his wife and son, William Edward, to Hillis Corner and set up his future home for some years to come. But his wife Caroline had by this time shown signs of grave failing health, which increased, and she finally passed away, leaving William Pritchett and his young son alone. And so for a while we must leave them and their sorrow and return later to open up other chapters in this, for the moment, bereaved life.

The death at Gurnard of George Pritchett and also the branching out to other places of the two sons, William to Hillis Pipe Yard and Frank to Chandlers Ford, near Eastleigh, seemed to bring to an end the family brickmaking industry at Gurnard, and Edmund Pritchett commenced what can only be described as a romantic series of adventures. He frequently moved on to new fields of interest that must have called forth qualities of exploiting new kinds of materials and the erection of new kilns, with plant in some cases, and in others to accustom himself in a remarkable manner to other existing brickyards of which he took over the tenancy. To sum up this remarkable aspect of his life and we must record that after leaving Gurnard he actually engaged in brickmaking in no fewer than six localities, principally on the south coast of the mainland, and in two places in the Island, viz at Sandford, near Godshill, and Cranmore, near Shalfleet.

Mention can only be made of the mainland ventures as any attempt to describe the innumerable details would **17** require a separate volume to do justice to this Nomad of Brickmaking. We will therefore content ourselves by briefly referring to various localities and hope the reader will use his powers of imagination in regard to the stupendous task of ever selecting premises, overcoming equipment difficulties, and starting up the making of bricks, each chapter quickly closing in order to move on to the next scene of conquest, and so on *ad lib*. Let us, however, record that from the Island he in turn engaged in his beloved brickmaking at Gilbury, near Beaulieu, at Chandlers Ford, Upham, Swanmore, and Beauworth.

After years of activity, always associated with brickmaking, Edmund Pritchett, as advancing years began to retard this champion of conquest, eventually returned to the Island, accompanied by his wife Elizabeth and the youngest son, George Henry. He made his home with his eldest son, William, at Hillis, and there continued, together with the son George Henry, to take a very active part in the increasingly important operations at Hillis Brick and Tile Works, which new title is by now necessary to describe it correctly.

We must once again return to the bereaved William Pritchett, whom we last referred to when deprived of his daughter Margaret, at Gurnard, and now, at Hillis, of his wife Caroline. Following a long and protracted period of inevitable expense we find William Pritchett and his young son, to use his own words, "reduced to a condition of complete domestic and financial limitations."

Time, in this as in every other period of adversity, at last seemed to disperse the clouds of gloom and loneliness, as we learn that he again married one Jane Woodford, of Cowes, who by a singular coincidence was born at Street Place Farm, Calbourne, four years later than himself, within sight of Eades Farm, Newbridge, the birthplace of William Pritchett. From now onward can be traced the upward climb to success and honour, embracing several fields of public service and business association, always with **18** the family instinct to engage in brickmaking operations, to which we must now give considerable space. The brick and tile making business had by his untiring efforts now begun to attract the support and confidence of the building community in the district, and he also enjoyed the privilege of supplying a large quantity of materials for his landlords, the Ward Estate, in connection with their numerous properties.

On September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1873, another event must be mentioned, as on that date a son was born of this second marriage of William and his wife Jane Pritchett, named Francis Joseph, who was destined in due course to perpetuate the family tradition of brick and tile making, and who, incidentally was inspired in later years to place on record this "History of Brickmaking by Six Generations of the Pritchett Family," as delineated in these pages. Later a second son was added to the family, Harry Edmund, in whom in succeeding chapters the reader will observe the advent of the sculptor and artist. A daughter, Bessie Agnes, completed this family.

By this time we must record the return from the mainland of Edmund Pritchett and his wife, with their son George Henry, to take part in the increasing business at Hillis Brickyard where, we learn, the manufacture of the "White Bricks" was again successfully established, together with a useful range of other goods, to which Edmund Pritchett contributed no small measure of success, gained through his most extraordinarily wide experience gathered during these previous years, whilst to his son, George Henry, can be clearly attributed the distinction of being the pioneer of the mechanical period destined in later years to oust the age-long initial processes, so that the ideal of craftsmanship, so patiently acquired, from now onward declined into a second place.

Once again history repeated itself in connection with the transport aspect of the brickyard activities. The constant difficulty of hiring team labour when required to bring in coal for

the kilns and to carry the goods manufactured to the **19** buildings at last compelled William Pritchett to look around for an agricultural holding. He was fortunate to secure the tenancy of Pallance Farm, comprising an area of 120 acres, actually adjoining the Hillis Brickyard, in the autumn of 1879. Here William Pritchett transferred his home, with his wife and family, together with his parents, Edmund and Elizabeth Pritchett, and their youngest son, George Henry. And so once again the farm team of horses for some years contributed to the success of the Hillis Brickyard by assisting with the transport problem.

William Pritchett now for some years carried on his farming interests in addition to the family industry of brick and tile making, at Hillis, where also his brother, George Henry, very materially contributed to the progress made by introducing, many improvements in the various processes of manufacture, particularly in mechanised directions, methods which in later years were carried to a high degree of efficiency.

Edmund Pritchett had by now reached the closing years of his adventures and widespread activity, and could justly claim a record of achievement in his day in doing his part to follow the family tradition of brick making. His life closed in the year 1890. Just previously his son, George Henry, severed his association with the family occupation and transferred his inherent mechanical ability to the mainland at Wimbledon, where for many years he enjoyed a remarkable degree of prosperity as a motor and cycle works proprietor. By now, in the year 1889, we must introduce the early chapters of the writer of this family chronicle, Francis Joseph, who again in later years was destined to add other achievements in brickmaking to this growing lineage of the Pritchett family, followed a little later by a next brother, Harry Edmund. A new feature in the chronological record must be given special mention, as he possessed the mind and the skill of the craftsman and also brought the sculptor's art into the clay-working industry. More meritorious still, he **20** became a successful student of the Late Stone Age, and his discoveries also of Cinerary Urns and other ancient pottery in the Island of the Early Bronze Age will add a wider chapter to the records of the family. To his work we will refer later, but for a while we must pursue the family of brick and tile making and record events which the writer humbly asks for consideration and leniency, as he must of necessity, in fairness to the family brickmaking history, speak and say far too much of his own achievements. But to hasten on, mention of another feature becomes incumbent also, that is, from now onward to enter into greater detail and record very many remarkable advances in this industry for the next half century during which the writer was entrusted with the family heritage.

It was in May 1889, that the writer, after receiving a generous education at Cowes, entered the arena, at the age of 15½ years, and joined his father at the Hillis Brick and Tile Works. At that time a somewhat general range of goods were made in moderate quantities, as in the year mentioned, in which he took but a very small part in the business, a total of only 273,000 goods were manufactured. These figures seem small if compared with those of later years, but the reader will observe that at this particular period there were some 30 brickyards in this Island, each one being almost entirely dependent on a small locality, extending at the most to that which the horse-drawn vehicle could negotiate. This limitation was soon, however, to be removed, as in due course the introduction of mechanical methods of transport were soon destined to overcome these barriers of distance.

The horse at this time operated the clay-preparing mill as well, and the methods of making were only just awaking from the manual principles. Drying of the goods was entirely dependent on weather conditions, and at the best was confined to eight months of the year, after which the digging and weathering of the clay were the only operations engaged upon for the next four months; the burning of the bricks and tiles also was carried out by two

intermittent types of kilns **21**, one a Scotch kiln and the other a grate-fired kiln, these types being almost universally used in small yards at this date.

The writer was now soon to have his first call to greater usefulness, as at the early age of 18 years his father brought home from one of his periodical journeys to his building patrons the challenge from a prominent Island architect that he must now turn his attention to the introduction of some form of machinery to make the roofing tiles, as the hand-moulded article was not in his opinion any longer acceptable, mainland manufacturers having commenced the production of a much better and more weather-resisting article made by mechanical processes. The necessity to improve was indeed apparent, and now the kindly parent called the writer to face and attempt the task, he providing the necessary skilled assistance, and after patient efforts success crowned the difficult task. The ingenious plant and all the necessary equipment was designed and made, and really good roofing tiles were produced. A photograph of this machine still exists to perpetuate this early achievement, which for many years onwards contributed to the growing success of the Hillis Brick and Tileworks. Following this step, rapid strides were made in the production of very many descriptions of roofing tiles, ridges, quarriers, etc., made both in Red and White varieties.

Some two years later another advance was made by the introduction of Pottery, which, together with the growth of the tile industry, necessitated the building of two down-draught kilns. Considerable success attended the making of garden and decorative pottery, as the works were honoured by supplying the Royal Palace gardens at Osborne, and several cargoes of flower pots were shipped each year to the island of Guernsey, as well as those supplied all over the Isle of Wight.

About this period we must introduce the Terra-cotta branch of the industry, which was inaugurated by the second son, Harry Edmund, whose gift of sculpture and artistic talent contributed in no small measure for the very many years **22** to raise the character of the business, and the results may be seen in many important buildings about the Island.

The writer, in the year 1896, married Emily R. Thomas, of Cowes, and there were born to them three sons and a daughter. In due course we shall be introduced to the eldest son, Francis William, being the direct line of descent now for six consecutive generations, and a few years later by the youngest son, George Edgar. These two brothers will in later chapters be seen to become men of a much wider scope of usefulness in the family industry, due in a large measure to the rapid advance of research and to the many aids to progress due to electricity and mechanical efficiency. But we will leave them during their early years and their education to prepare them for their part in the destinies of this remarkable family of brick and tile makers.

The next few years were to be the crowning period of the Hillis Brick and Tile Works, during which William Pritchett and his son Francis Joseph, the writer of this book, spared no effort or expense to install much useful machinery which was in turn driven first by oil and later by Stein engines. Additional drying sheds were erected, together with another kiln, now making five altogether, and very many improvements were perfected in the various processes of manufacture. To this must be added a tribute to a loyal and skilled staff of employees, who contributed greatly to the success of these succeeding years.

Limitation in the scope of transport was once again destined to figure in the development of the family business. Whilst the more valuable goods, such as the many varieties of Tiles, the Pottery, Terra Cotta, etc., could be carried to many of the Island towns, it was found that a much larger number of the ordinary building bricks must be provided, and, incidentally, taken to the more remote districts. This was out of the question at the Hillis Yard, and so additional premises were sought which would be more centrally situated and, above all, with railway facilities in the nature of a siding, to which the coal for the kilns

could be much more cheaply brought and, still more important, **23** providing an almost unlimited outlet to all the principal districts at reasonable cost. This feature was so important in this era of the horse-drawn vehicle that it was realised that some important step must be taken without further delay.

After careful investigation an opportunity came, apparently ideal in character, and the Gunville Brickyard, near Newport, was duly leased from its owner. Here a useful variety of Red and White Clay, together with an abundance of sand and loam, were available. In the year 1900 William Pritchett and the writer commenced the rapid development of the property and after some two or three years of progress it became abundantly clear that a still further step must be taken, and to that end the family business was successfully formed into a Limited Company. Friends and interested parties were invited to provide the additional capital to take what was at this period a very great step forward in the family history. Hitherto all the activities of this brick-making family, and also those of their Island colleagues, were entirely confined to a seasonal limitation of eight months during which suitable weather conditions prevailed, and the remaining, four months of each year were devoted to digging and weathering, the clay, etc. for the ensuing season, together with repairs and renewals to plant and premises where necessary.

The reader will now see that this next step on the Company's newly acquired works at Gunville was to mark a great advance in many directions.

From this period the writer especially desires to ask indulgence, in order to record with fairness the important period now to be entered upon, as the position of Managing Director placed on him a very heavy responsibility in laying out the admirable premises at Gunville and equipping them with the most up-to-date machinery to make a large number of bricks with clay taken direct from the face of the pit, and eliminating the hitherto heavy winter expenses. An efficient power service was provided by the installation of a large Lancashire Boiler, which, together with two **24** engines, were employed to operate other machinery and plant for the production of a large quantity of Facing Bricks, both red and white, together with a wide range of the many varieties of ornamental goods necessary to complete any kind of building. Mention must be made also of the erection of a range of steam-heated drying rooms, necessary to cope with some 3,000,000 bricks each year, entirely independent of weather conditions; other drying facilities for the Facing Bricks were also included in this model brickyard. For the burning of these goods a continuous Hoffman kiln was erected for the common bricks, and three other intermittent kilns of the latest types were provided to burn all the red and white Facing, and Ornamental Bricks. One other step must be mentioned: the Telephone was installed, thereby connecting the many customers to the works, ensuring promptness of delivery. Perhaps the reader will remember that at that date time was a negligible factor. But **25** there was now an awakening and another memorable step forward in the purchase of a steam road engine and wagon, superseding the limited efforts of the horse-drawn carts. With the completion of this most up-to-date Machinery, Plant and Buildings the Company stepped over for the first time in Island history to continuous output throughout the year. From now we enter upon another period of activity with these modern works, as, in addition to the reputable Hillis Brick and Tile Works, every district, however remote, came within the scope of the Company's operations.

A brief chapter is here to be mentioned in connection with the eldest son of William Pritchett, William Edward, who, as soon as he reached a suitable age, added an entirely new line to the previous family history, in this case Chemistry. After several years of training and occupying a number of responsible positions, taking, his qualifying degree, he practised as a Chemist and Druggist for many years. But unfortunately ill health compelled him to relinquish his life's work and return to the family interests in the Island.

This coincided with the expansion of the **25** family business into a Company administration, and he undertook the Secretaryship for the next few years, thereby also uniting himself for a while in the family industry. His life, however, was brought to a close at a somewhat early age owing to physical limitation, but not before he had served his day and generation with distinction. The reader will appreciate to some extent the very great advantage resulting from the establishment of the “ Continuous throughout the year “ method of manufacture when it is considered that at this period each and all of the Island brickyards were limited to seasonal production the only. The new method resulted in the business of Pritchett and Co., Ltd., reaching the total output of 5,600,000 goods inclusive of all varieties, in the highest year of their operations. When these figures are compared with those of the writer’s first year’s association with the family business, only 16 years before, one can gain some idea of the great amount of research, study, and endless travel in order to prepare the necessary plans and co-ordinate these installations now operating at the Hillis and Gunville Works of the Company.

During the next few years many important buildings were erected with the Company’s products. Amongst others may be mentioned the rebuilding of Parkhurst Barracks which, incidentally, is the second association with this institution in the family history, the Royal Naval Hospital at Osborne, the Isolation Hospital near Newport, numerous Religious Buildings, Public Institutions together with very many private buildings for which the Company’s Bricks and Tiles were chosen.

It will be difficult for the reader fully to enter into the pathos and misfortune soon to spread itself over this remarkable industry, but the writer, looking back over some 25 years can attribute this calamity almost entirely to the enterprise which placed the Company so far ahead of previous methods of manufacture, but yet not understood by its other proprietors and valued in its relative advancement. However this may be explained, the cloud of **26** impending trouble began to reveal itself in what is only too frequently the case, viz., differences of opinion amongst its administrative proprietors, this forming again a further opportunity for others of its interested parties to do what is so often the case when adversity troubles any undertaking; they wantonly agreed to cast away this remarkable business and end its hard-won position as a model Brick and Tile making business by placing it in liquidation. History alone will give its verdict upon this stupendous folly; but let us with some degree of sympathy close this sad chapter and bid farewell to the Pritchett family of Brickmakers as they pass into oblivion for a while.

Another page now opens, one of further tribulation also, as on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1914, William Pritchett, the fourth generation of this growing family of Brick-makers, passes to his rest only 10 days short of 78 years. He was almost entirely associated with the Brick and Tile-making industry and he, too, carried the family honour a very long way forward during a life of unswerving desire to unstintingly give his best in every way and to leave this sphere the better for his term of opportunity. A Bronze Memorial Tablet is erected at the offices of his son’s Works at Rookley, to point ever onward to them and all others who chance to come that way, and to perpetuate his dearly cherished association with the making, of Bricks and Tiles.

On October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1919, the writer, Francis Joseph Pritchett, steps humbly from the unutterable gloom of the past, and on that day, at 3.10 p.m., the first sod is turned in opening the Northwood Brickyard, alone, in an empty field, almost penniless, yet inspired by perhaps the greatest of all incentives, the inherent hope to try one’s best, however great the handicap. So again commences the making of Bricks and Tiles. Another factor of great importance must now be mentioned. The writer’s eldest son, Francis William, having recently returned from serving his country in the Great War, now joins the growing family lean each of brick makers; and after a while, the youngest son, George Edgar **27** also takes

his place in the climb back to fame. These two sons now claim the distinction, of being the sixth consecutive generation of tile Pritchett family of Brick-makers, and now we must endeavour to enlist the sympathies of the reader to note the steps taken, which will be the subject matter of the following chapters.

The writer does not wish unduly to enlarge upon the almost hopeless start of this new era in the family history, but it may serve a good purpose, if only to inspire others similarly placed, to observe that though this beginning was made almost destitute of necessary essentials - in an empty field - and against competition from many other well-established businesses, in some cases supported by influential and financial interests, facts which foreshadowed the most formidable struggle to regain an entry, however small, in the Island Building Industry.

Now to record the very first step in this empty field, the reader must remember that at this terrible period of national exhaustion, immediately following the Great War, no materials were available to assist on this barren site, even if they could be afforded, which was not the case, and so the humble family just did what many others in many parts of the world have done before, they merely cut the turves about the site on which to erect the first shed and, still more striking, even built the walls of the first kiln with these also. Both these erections still stand to remind us of this humble beginning. The shed in which it was intended to make the first bricks was roofed with poles cut from the nearby wood and covered with straw thatching. To complete the turf-built kiln a small quantity of old bricks was obtained for the construction of the simplest form of temporary furnaces, further equipment was obtained from a dismantled Brickyard in the locality, consisting of a horse-pug mill, hack covers made of board, together with other necessary utensils and plant which formed just the barest necessities to commence this most humble business. Clay was dug, the sand required to mix with it was **28** obtained from a nearby pit, and a start was actually made. The tempering of the clay was effected by horse labour attached to the pug mill, and the bricks moulded by hand, dried on hacks out of doors, and a little later on two open drying sheds erected from timber cut in the coppice and covered with thatch. The burning of the first kiln of these bricks was carried out under conditions seemingly impossible with a turf-built kiln. Could conditions be more primitive and seemingly hopeless? And yet these were actually the conditions under which the writer and his sons commenced the climb back to take their place in perpetuating the Pritchett family of brick-making, which we invite the reader to follow for the next few years.

A further step followed, by making a small number of field drain -pipes, and also a trial sample of roofing tiles. This was only made possible by the kindly attitude of another brickyard proprietor in lending a small hand-power machine for the purpose. Again, could circumstances be less propitious? Each of these feeble efforts met with some success, the goods produced found a ready sale, and so we must record that the industry had now actually become a reality. Good fortune soon came to stimulate this childlike effort, as national housing conditions were so urgent that Government assistance was forthcoming in what was known as the Addison Housing Scheme. The scheme was adopted in the adjoining towns, and the humble Pritchett family were thereby provided with an unlooked-for opportunity to enlarge their business. It was now necessary to adopt some very much more effective means to supply orders for a considerable number of roofing tiles and their accessories, which were literally heaped upon the humble brickyard. Once again another generous-hearted fellow brickyard proprietor who wished to dispose of his business, which was equipped with a very desirable set of machinery entirely suited to small yards, sold to the writer and his sons his machinery and plant. This was transferred to the Northwood brickyard and duly erected. It consisted of an engine, shafting, clay mill, two tile and pipe machines, all **29** for power operation, with many accessories, together

with a hand-power pipe machine. This seemed particularly fortunate, as it enabled the writer to return the borrowed machine to the considerate owner, whose kindly action will always remain a pleasant memory and retain the gratitude of the writer in his so desperate attempt to restart the family industry. But to hasten on. By now the rapid steps that were being taken to provide more houses compelled the Pritchett family to considerably speed up their arrangements, and to this end a second and more suitable down-draught type of kiln was erected, together with a much more commodious drying shed. During, the next few years a great quantity of roofing tiles, with other numerous accessories, land drain pipes, and a variety of goods now became very much in demand.

The family business of F. J. Pritchett and Sons had by now an established place in the Island building industry, and succeeding chapters must record in greater detail events and circumstances which the writer trusts will prove of increasing interest.

The reader is asked especially to bear in mind that the whole of creation seems to have entered upon a new era of existence since the Great War, as the result of the rapid expansion of many ingenious aids to progress, by a wider use of electricity, new methods of transport, and a general speeding up in almost every branch of science and research work. Even the Brick and Tile-makers of the present day must bring to bear a wider outlook and higher aspect of their opportunities if they desire to attain to the highest positions both in quality and popularity of price, coupled with an abundant output of all the many classes of goods necessary to promote the well being of tile building trade.

Another chapter now records the re-entry of Harry Pritchett, the writer's brother, into the brickyard activities after being engaged for several years with the late William Pritchett, his father, with the agricultural interests at Pallance Farm to which he had succeeded with the tenancy. Upon the disposal of the very many properties of the Estate **30** by its owners during the period of the Great War, Harry Pritchett decided to retire from this agricultural association and again take up his life's natural talent and inclination in the artistic branch of the family brick and tile-making industry, and the reader will note that his numerous additions to the artistic pottery and terra-cotta enrichments can be found in many Island buildings and grounds. In a later chapter reference will be made to his discoveries of the Bronze Age pottery, thereby forging an interesting link between the ancient and the modern Potter.

Now must be recorded another chapter in the onward march of events, one destined to precede an epoch marking the highest and attainments of this virile family of brick-makers. The time had now again come when a more suitable position, having much greater scope for development, must be sought, as the Northwood Yard was so entirely unsuited for further advancement.

After much careful investigation a site was selected in the centre of the Island, at Rookley, where both Clay and Ferruginous Sand of the Cretaceous Period were found in abundance, - well known for its remarkable colour possibilities. Here negotiations resulted in obtaining a valuable area estimated to sustain a large annual output for at least a century.

In the spring of 1924 a commencement was made with this site under most humble conditions. The writer and his brother, Harry Edmund, entered this empty field with only a small handful of material, together with some necessary tools, and erected a temporary shed in which to shelter and make possible the next step, that of building a kiln of the down-draught type. A small staff was now necessary to hasten on the erection of this kiln, and also to build an open-air drying shed, followed by stabling to accommodate the horse which was needed for the clay mill. In the autumn of this year the first bricks were actually made, but inadequate arrangements prevented the completion of the kiln until the following spring. And now the first kiln of bricks was duly burnt, and when taken out proved to be most <sup>31</sup>satisfactory, a fact which in no small measure contributed to the

enthusiasm which followed for the next few years. The reader must remember that at this still struggling period in the Pritchett family's re-entry into the brick-making industry, production was again only possible on the seasonal conditions; but, notwithstanding these limitations, considerable progress was made by the addition of a small brick machine and a portable steam engine, which in turn led to another drying shed and a second down-draught kiln. By now quite a good business was established with the two small yards, the one at Northwood concentrating on Tiles, Pipes, and other accessories, whilst the central yard at Rookley was entirely devoted to supplying the building trade with good bricks.

We must step aside again from the Brick-making to record that on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1928, the writer's wife was laid to rest, so early in her life, after two years of suffering. This sorrow was almost immediately followed by the writer's most serious illness and physical breakdown, extending to 15 months, followed by a period of convalescence. During this difficult time of sorrow and illness the brick and tilemaking business was most ably carried on by the writer's two sons, Francis William and George Edgar, and his brother, Harry Edmund. During this period and the following few years, a great deal of experience was gained, which indicated beyond doubt that the premises were capable of development much beyond anything previously undertaken by the Pritchett family.

In the next two years certain steps were taken towards the realisation of this ambition by installing a modern Crude Oil Engine of 31-b.h.p., together with a 20-kilowatt generator from which DC current was made on a small scale to carry out certain experiments in connection with the drying of goods from waste heat from the kilns, as well as providing artificial light in the yard, another much-desired aid to advancement. A further brick machine was also installed, as well as a Wootton hand-power Brick Press, as it was now **32** found desirable to add another class of Facing Bricks to those hitherto made by hand-moulding, as the Repressed Facing Bricks were much more suited to larger buildings, and were also useful for engineering purposes. These in turn began to claim considerable favour with the building trade; but perhaps the erection of a 16-chamber Hoffman was the most ambitious step towards the desired development so necessary now at the Rookley Brickyard. Mention must also be made of a preliminary trial in the making of Roofing Tiles by hand-moulding, as by now there were indications that these Tiles were returning to popularity, as well as the hand-moulded Facing Bricks. Tile Hoffman kiln proved a great success as a bridge over which the hitherto seasonal operations at the Rookley Brickyard were now about to pass into all up-to-date model works. It was found necessary to erect also two temporary Scotch kilns to help in maintaining an increased output of bricks during this rapidly awakening period. We must not close this chapter without recording that at the Northwood Yard considerable progress was being made in developing the Tile and Pipe-making industry, which in common with all other factors appertaining to the Building Trade had by now reached a very much higher standard of quality, and it was realised that a new and much higher standard of national dignity was awakening all over the country.

During this transitional period reference must be made to another propitious step, not actually connected with the making of Bricks and Tiles directly, but later experience proved beyond all doubt that it restored the writer to a condition in which he could happily once again attempt to attain the highest standard in the manufacture of Bricks and Tiles, such as had never before been reached in the family history. On September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1930, the writer married Emily Olive, daughter of Captain H. Dawkins, of Emsworth and Cowes, and he respectfully records that to this lady's devoted ministrations he attributes in a large measure his return to perfect health and happiness, enabling him to **33** carry the standard of success much higher, in conjunction with his two sons, Francis William and George Edgar.

This chapter marks the phenomenal strides made by the Pritchett family of Brick and Tile-makers, leading to the greatest period of success in their history, the result of experience gained by succeeding generations, and also of the almost endless facilities which science and invention had made possible in the development of the Rookley Brick and Tile Works by F. J. Pritchett and Sons. Three distinct varieties of goods were manufactured, viz., "Sand-faced Hand-moulded" Bricks and Tiles, "Plastic Machine finished goods" and "Semi-dry" Common Bricks. These three methods made it necessary to divide the depth of the clay face at the pit into three separate workings: the top one-third for the first-named goods, the second one-third for the Plastic variety, whilst the lower one-third constituted a most excellent grade of material, dry enough for granulation and ideally suited to the Semi-dry process of Common Brick-making. Still another factor must be given prominence, the remarkable deposit of Lower Greensands, of which the property comprised a considerable area, which when added in suitable quantities to the clays before going, to their various processes made it possible for the specialised kilns to produce the extremely wide range of desirable artistic shades of colour for which the works had gained considerable reputation.

Let us first give consideration to the Sand-faced hand-moulded goods. For these the clay and sand is taken direct from the face and conveyed by an efficient system of light railway and wagons drawn up the main incline by winding gear to the soaking and mixing bays, whence it is taken each following day and prepared in a 6ft. Wet Pan which in turn feeds a specially designed vertical mill, designed by the writer, standing on a cement base, around which the five moulders are grouped in a circle, each having his own control, so that he receives a continuous supply of highly prepared material for his requirements. From these moulders the bricks are taken and placed by page lads on the **34** several rack-brick-drying cars standing on adjacent rails. These cars, each containing 378 hand-moulded facing bricks, are in turn transferred into the humid end of the battery of six tunnel dryers, as will be described later in this chapter when referring to the drying systems.

The Sand-faced hand-moulded Roofing Tiles also receive their clay and sand as previously described from the pit, but in this case it is taken to a much heavier machine and is first fed into a 7ft. Wet Pan, which in turn feeds into rollers and a large horizontal Pug Mill. From this the material is taken and placed in an adjoining shed to mature for at least a week, after which it is again passed through the Pugging machine and then taken to the Tile moulders, who make the tiles complete with nibs and pinholes and place them on racks to be again taken to the extensive Tile-drying sheds. These roofing tiles, together with all their necessary fitments, are constantly under the care of an attendant, who completes the shaping by putting them in chequer formation on hacks extending the entire length of the cement floor, at suitable distances apart, where they remain for some four to six weeks before burning.

Flower Pots are also made by the Potter from similar clay on a wheel, an operation requiring considerable skill. These, too, are dried on boards on the cement floor dryer before burning. Before passing from these hand-moulded goods it is necessary to add that a considerable number, comprising a great range of varieties of the ornamental bricks and tiles, are made and dried by similar methods before being burnt with all their many enrichments.

And now we proceed to the "Plastic" variety. Material for this class of goods is obtained principally from the second in depth of the pit face division, but in certain cases where colour effect is of greater importance some of it is taken from the upper division also, and in turn conveyed to the machine shed. In this case it is prepared and in some cases made into goods by the Whitehead 7ft. Wet Pan, Rollers, and Pugging-machine; for wire-cut bricks it is finished by the cutting-off table and then taken to the drying shed. **35** If for the

making of Repressed Facing Bricks, the material is taken from the upper division of the pit and treated with special care through the Whitehead machine, where it is formed into bricks and taken to the pressing shed, and there rested for 24 hours or so, after which it is rolled in sand, passed through a Bennett and Sayer power-pressing machine, and then taken to the drying sheds. A very considerable annual output of this class of Repressed Facing Brick is manufactured.

Other goods of a Plastic character are made also, such as Ridge Tiles, Field Drain Pipes, Quarries, etc., each being dried in selected positions in the drying sheds.

Perhaps of all the advancement that has been possible in every branch of the Brick and Tile-making industry nothing, in the opinion of the writer, has been so exceptionally advantageous as the Semi-dry Process of common brick making. Of this particular acquisition F. J. Pritchett and Sons became the sole manufacturers in the Island with their Scholfield 9ft. Semi-dry Pan, Elevators, and two Pressing machines capable of making 100,000 good Common Bricks each week if fully engaged. The material for this is taken at the lower division of the pit and is hard, dry, and not suitable for plastic procedure. This material also is transferred over the efficient light rail and wagon installation to the shed in which a 30-ton machine is always running through all seasons of the year. The bricks made are taken direct into the Hoffman kiln for burning, or are placed immediately in readiness for the kiln on cement floors around the kiln. Some material advantage is thereby gained, as the bricks become warmed before going through the firing process. Only half an hour is necessary for all the processes, from the actual clay face to the kiln. Those readers who have spent their lives connected in some way with the making of bricks can appreciate the almost complete removal of the many and varied intervening processes and, incidentally, the lessening of expenses in the cherished principle of Semi-dry Brick-making. One small detail must not be overlooked; the extremely changeable weather **36** conditions prevailing in this country, which has made it desirable to erect a large shed in the immediate proximity of this machinery, in which a very great quantity of dry material is stored for the winter. The material is easily obtainable during the long and fine summer months, in quantities over and beyond what is needed for daily requirements. This prudent provision obviates much unnecessary inconvenience and, incidentally, the quality of the goods is improved as well.

Having explained the methods by which the three classes of goods commence their process of evolution on their way towards completion, we must briefly inspect the Power House in its vital responsibility as the mainspring of the factory. It will be recalled that two crude oil engines are installed, whilst provision has been made in the design for two others in order to complete an up-to-date source of energy to operate the several lines of overhead shafting necessary to convey power to the respective machines, etc., and also to drive the two electric generators from which a supply of DC current at 240 volts is obtained. The current is taken from the switchboard by cables to all parts of the works, including two directors' houses, and the clay pit as well, where it operates an efficient pumping plant to keep the pit clear of water. The current is principally used to operate the electric motors driving the five large circulating fans which entirely control the two continuous kilns, and also manipulate the several artificial drying systems as well as the lighting of the entire works.

The writer desires to stress the almost incalculable advantage derived from the use of electricity to make possible this transformation of the age-old industry of brick-making from a seasonal occupation full of limitations imposed by inclement weather, to the present period, pulsating with perpetual progress throughout the nights as well as the days of the entire year.

We will now in passing endeavour to describe the several drying systems, each particular method differing **37** in detail from the other, but all performing a most important part in the manufacture of bricks and tiles, which the reader will be careful to remember are made from cold, wet clay and sand—indeed a very definite basic disadvantage, but which before being taken to the kiln must have all their inherent moisture dried out, and warmed.

Five open-air hack sheds still remain of the older method; these are used as before to augment the output during the eight months of suitable weather, and when left at the late autumn full of goods form a useful reserve of bricks, etc., to tide over periods of exceptional weather limitations as the winter continues.

Two raised cement floor dryers, used more particularly for the drying of Tiles, Flower Pots, and special goods, are heated by the advance gases drawn from the Belgian grate-fired kiln by a large circulating fan, driven by electric motor; these gases pass under the floors and ultimately are discharged up the works stack.

A battery of six Humidity Track Tunnel Dryers are also engaged to receive and dry in three to four days the considerable daily output of Hand-moulded Facing Bricks, which are heated to a relatively high temperature by the hot air drawn from the cooling goods also in the Belgian kiln and discharged in a very considerable amount into the kiln end of these tunnel dryers. This is a highly successful method of treating these hand-made bricks in so limited a space and, incidentally, they are untouched by hand from the time they leave the moulders' room until they arrive at the kiln wickets hot and bone dry. Again, what a most marvellous advance from the out-of-door hacks of only a few years ago!

One other system differs in manipulation only, as it is constructed to cover a large area, on two floors, each formed by batten floors—with spaces between. Under all these are constructed brick flues, which in turn deliver a volume of low temperature air extracted from the cooling bricks in the Hoffman kiln, operated also by a large fan and electric **38** motor. This system is most suitable for the very considerable output of Repressed Facing Bricks and other Plastic goods. The reader will observe that all these methods of artificial drying contribute materially to the wonderful advance in the process of Brick and Tile-making, which can now be carried on throughout the year, irrespective of weather conditions.

And now we must move on to the last and by far the most important part in the manufacture of all these different classes of goods, that is the Burning in the Kilns. At this stage all that has been done so carefully and efficiently can easily be spoiled, whilst on the other hand a quality of texture, colour effect and weather resisting properties can be attained with almost certain regularity, and when these ideals are constantly maintained they, in turn, ensure an almost certain increasing demand for the goods produced.

We will first call attention to the two Downdraught Kilns, one 15ft. and the other 19ft. in diameter, with other measurements in corresponding proportion. These two kilns have their own chimney and are used to burn all the special goods for those where emergency orders are accommodated, and for those other goods which require special and, occasionally, experimental firing. Goods required at short notice can also be very quickly dealt with, much sooner than if they received the longer routine of the continuous kilns. They are, however, a little less reliable and certainly much more expensive from a fuel point of view.

The Hoffman Continuous Kiln must be described next. It is used almost exclusively for the burning of about three millions of Common Bricks each year, using Dust Coal, which is fed on the top through a considerable number of holes directly in amongst the goods, and is by far the cheapest method having regard to the consumption of fuel. The kiln consists of 16 chambers, each 15ft. long, 11ft. wide, and 9ft. high, and its draught is maintained at the desired speed by the Kiln Fan Room, which will be described later. The

considerable volume of available heat derived from the cooling goods is in this case drawn from the kiln by a large **39** fan, driven by an electric motor, and is capable of dealing with no less than 20,000 cubic feet of hot air per minute continuously throughout the day and night. This hot air is used in connection with the open floor drying system. Before leaving this kiln, perhaps an incident in its inauguration deserves mention, if only to show to what extent the Pritchett family derive their inborn interest in their cherished industry. When this kiln was duly ready to have its furnaces kindled, after about a year spent in its erection, arrangements were made for a Gathering of the despised descendants of Pharaoh's days to commemorate this event, and the oldest member of the family, George Henry Pritchett, journeyed from his home and business at Wimbledon, he being the only remaining member of the Fourth Generation of brick-makers. Next came the writer, and his brother, Harry Edmund, representing the Fifth Generation, then followed Francis William and his brother George Edgar, who represented the Sixth Generation and, if more were needed to ensure continuity of heritage, a grandson of the writer was present to represent the next and Seventh Generation of this race of brick-makers, should he be spared to reach mature years, together with his brother and also the son of George Edgar, who has entered this world's arena since this remarkable gathering of the clan. And so on the 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1936, four generations of the Pritchett family of brick-makers stood in a line in front of the furnaces and each contributed his quota in the kindling of the fires, which started this renowned kiln on its mission of usefulness, to provide an abundance of bricks wherewith to help build homes for the Island folk.

Next we come to the Belgian grate-fired Continuous Kiln. This consists of 22 Chambers, each 9ft. long, 9ft. wide, and 9ft. high, and is fired at the wickets through furnace doors, using best screened coal. Its draught is also provided and maintained by two separate installations of large fans each electrically driven. The one system takes the advance kiln gases to the raised Cement Floor Dryers whilst the other system carries these gases, or any part of **40** them, into the Fan Room previously mentioned. It is constructed immediately in proximity to the base of the works chimney stack and consists of a large underground chamber into which three large brick-built mains diverge, one to each of the two kilns just described, whilst the third main controls the Jubilee Grate-fired Continuous Kiln now in course of construction, to which reference will be made later. Above this chamber are two electrically driven Fans capable of dealing, with no less than 27,500 cubic feet of kiln waste gases per minute. This Fan Room installation enables the management to manipulate the speed and efficiency of the process of burning in each of these kilns by a suitable regulator provided immediately at the fans' suction entry. The considerable volume of higher temperature air available from the cooling goods is also drawn from the kiln by an electrically operated fan and is, in turn, discharged into the kiln end of the battery of six Humidity Tunnel Dryers. This kiln is supplied with all the Facing, Bricks, Roofing Tiles, and Pottery, and its accuracy of firing, together with almost complete control of each separate chamber, makes this Belgian Kiln the masterpiece of kiln design and output up to the present.

Perhaps another chapter may be permissible in connection with the kilns before passing on, as in this important process of burning the goods an almost endless field of research and efficiency of design is continually present with the Directors, and in this case the ever-increasing amount of goods required to meet the demands of the building trade has resulted in the preparation by the writer of another set of plans of even a higher degree of efficiency than ever before attained. This structure is now actually in course of creation, and in its design another most important feature has been introduced, from which the writer has great expectations as to its almost complete control and greatly reduced cost of fuel. At the same time, an even greater output of goods may with confidence be expected,

but we must leave this ambitious effort to be described in another **41** volume, should the life of the writer be spared and other necessary factors still be propitious. Should his plans mature, they will enrich the life of one who has given his best for 50 years to carry forward the great heritage imposed upon each succeeding generation of this family of Brick and Tile-makers.

During these last ambitious years, with the responsibility of management and finance in connection with this eventful era of progress, it was thought advisable to widen the family aspect of the business, and this resulted in the undertaking being formed into a Private Limited Company on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1936, and now we may use its more important title of F. J. Pritchett and Sons, Ltd. From this time very much more prominence must be given to the representatives of the Sixth Generation of this brickmaking, family, the two sons of the writer, Francis William and George Edgar, whose unceasing efforts and singleness of purpose have contributed in great measure to the success that has been attained hitherto. The elder has undertaken the position of Representative and Sales Director of the many and varied products of the Company, whilst George Edgar has taken the position of Director and is responsible for Works Management, a task to which he has brought keen interest in all the many modern inventions to which this industry has attained, which has to some extent been due to his own personal study, as well as to the result of his visits to important first-class works on the mainland.

Happy, indeed, is the father of two sons who have made good in their early days and have inclined their hearts to knowledge and turned their backs on the hollow and empty delusions so often deserved at this day. Now both still young, their lives still before them, we trust, and both blessed with a son themselves, this is the proud heritage to which those who choose this better path are again in their turn blessed, and so the reader is asked to bear in mind their part, so closely allied to the efforts of the writer, in endeavouring to march forward in the design, erection, and installation of these numerous and interesting ramifications.

**42** Now one chapter remains to mention that to co-ordinate all these achievements a great responsibility has rested with the Secretary and his office staff, than whom none have been more loyal and painstaking, whilst even another priceless possession in this hub of industry is the considerable staff of great-hearted men and lads, some of whom can trace their association with the family activities right back to their childhood days. This company of skilled men, led by foremen of whom no words of praise can be too highly spoken, have each and all contributed indeed their best to the success of this industry. One word more must be spoken, as the writer desires to record with the deepest sense of gratitude and appreciation that throughout the whole of the 50 years during which he has enjoyed the association of this large family of employees never once has he been confronted with any discord or resort to duress, a condition at this day perhaps almost without parallel. If asked for the reason the writer would reply by saying that he has always shared with those he led any and every occupation, and has endeavored always to do what was just and right and treat all with kindness and consideration.

During these days of such remarkable developments at Rookley, the Northwood Brick and Tile Works had maintained a considerable measure of success in supply of tiles and numerous accessories, there being a good demand for the land drain pipes now used in considerable quantities on the main highway improvements extending all over the Island. But in the light of the considerable development at the Rookley Works, now equipped with the most up-to-date methods of production, it was considered wise to adopt a policy of gradually absorbing all the varieties of goods manufactured at Northwood, under somewhat out of date conditions, and their removal to the modern works at Rookley, as

this would ensure the raising of the standard of quality to a much higher level and, at the same time promote the better regulation of the Company's undertaking.

Another addition to the business at this time was the **43** acquisition of the "Quarry Lane" White Clay Deposit at Newbridge, where a most valuable stratum of the "Osborne Beds" of Tertiary Period Clay is located, together with silver sand and an abundant deposit also of the Bembridge Limestone. This White Clay is dug and conveyed by lorries to the Rookley Works, where it is treated by the appropriate machinery and manufactured into a very Choice tint of Primrose Colour Facing Bricks, which meet with a ready demand in the Island, and their merit has now found acceptance on the mainland. A recent notable case is to be mentioned by their being specified for public works in the City of Portsmouth. Here at Quarry Lane one stands on almost enchanted ground, as it is virtually in sight at only a very short distance of the Pritchett family's romantic efforts at Ningwood, where these noted "White Bricks were manufactured by George Pritchett over 100 years ago and have been continuously produced from that day through this long period right up to the present as a special pride of manufacture peculiar to the Pritchett family of Brickmakers. Before passing on it may be stated that considerable effort is being made to make these special Primrose Tint Facing Bricks popular on the mainland for municipal buildings where permissible. From this unusual tint clay much progress has been also made in the making of artistic pottery and other lines of manufacture from the same material is contemplated in the near future.

The reader will now have completed the perusal of an inspiring and interesting account of the modernising of the Rookley Brick and Tile Works, equipped with the most modern Plant, Machinery and Kilns which has resulted in raising the standard of quality to a much higher level. During the past year there have been manufactured and disposed of to every district in the Isle of Wight no less than over 51 millions of goods, inclusive of all varieties, which have been used on almost every class of building, both private and for public works. To mention only a recent notable case, the Pritchett Company's Bricks, about 500,000 in number, were selected and used in the erection of the **44** County Hall, at Newport, the Parliament House of the County of the Isle of Wight.

The distribution of all these goods is carried out by a fleet of four Bedford 3-ton lorries, which carry the ever increasing output of materials to every district in the Island in an efficient and prompt manner.

In conclusion, the writer has endeavoured to narrate the remarkable Pritchett family association with the Brick and Tile-making industry, now extending to Six consecutive generations, with every prospect of the Seventh to follow when the Pritchett grandsons reach the necessary age. In looking back over these 140 years and the almost incredible advances made in the methods employed, one can only say how much we all owe to the marvellous advance in the numerous mechanical and scientific accomplishments now enjoyed. Let us all endeavour in each succeeding year, with any and every opportunity that may present itself, to give without stint or consideration our Best Service in order to carry on in the future the honour and privilege of association with the making of Bricks and Tiles.

And now, at the age of 65½ years, still in, perfect health, every faculty and member unimpaired, and full of gratitude for all the many blessings that have attended his efforts, the writer arrives at May, 1939. He looks back to May, 1889, and, in celebrating the Jubilee of his association with the Pritchett family of Brick and Tilemakers (the fifth consecutive generation in the business), desires to place on record in this book events and achievements extending back 140 years which he trusts will not only form an interesting narrative, but may serve to encourage any who chance to peruse these pages.

