

Quarrymen in the Town Quarry, Weston-super-Mare

At a recent event at the Town Quarry the Weston Family History decided to take a look at some of the men who had worked there. The quarry had been in operation for every census now available for research from 1841 to 1911.

In the 1881 census we found the following men with jobs relating to the Quarry

Joseph ATHAY	married	35	born Shipham	a Quarry Labourer
Alfred BAKER	married	30	born Weston-s-Mare,	a quarryman (stone)
Fred BAKER	unmarried	14	born Weston-s-Mare,	a quarryman
Henry BAKER	married	29	born Weston-s-Mare,	a stone quarryman
Henry BAKER	married	36	born Weston-s-Mare,	a stone quarryman
William BAKER	married	56	born Ashcombe,	a quarryman (stone)
William BAKER	unmarried	21	born Weston-s-Mare,	a stone quarryman
John COUNSELL	married	63	born Weston-s-Mare,	a stone quarryman
John DUNSCOMBE	married	63	born Weston-s-Mare,	a stone quarryman
Fred VIAL (or VILE)	unmarried	28	born Taunton,	a Quarry Labourer
John SIMONS	married	76	born Bagborough,	a Stone Labourer (Quarryman)
Robert TREGO	married	30	born Wells,	a stone quarryman
William TREGO	married	36	born Weston-s-Mare,	a stone quarryman
James MADRICK	married	48	born Milton,	a Quarry Labourer
James WATTS	married	64	born Banwell	a Quarry Labourer

Most of the men were living in the Carlton Street area except for John COUNSELL whose address was 36, South Road. In 1871 he was living at Quarry Road Lodge which suggests that he might have been the foreman at the Quarry at that time. John died in 1885; he is buried in the Cemetery with his wife Prudence but there is no memorial on the grave. In 1851 he was an Agricultural Labourer living in a cottage near Ashcombe Farm. John COUNSELL had married Prudence GOULD in 1849 both came from families long established in the area. It is possible that John was the grandson of Isaac COUNSELL, one of the Weston Worthies, whose portraits are in the Museum in Weston.



The BAKER family who feature in the list employed in the Quarry in 1881 have a long connection with the Quarry. The 56 year-old William BAKER listed above is the same person who was written

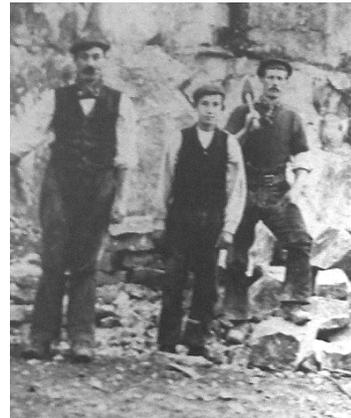
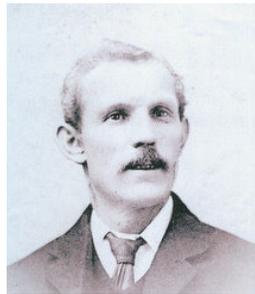
WESTON-SUPER-MARE.

GUN ACCIDENT.—On Saturday last an accident befel a man named William Baker, who worked at the town-stone quarry. It appears that Baker had for some purpose or other a loaded gun—one that unscrews into parts—in his coat pocket, and that whilst walking in the plantation adjoining the quarry the barrel of the gun fell from his pocket and exploded, the entire charge entering his right hip, and carrying away nearly the whole of the flesh attached to it. The unfortunate man was as speedily as possible conveyed in a cart to his home in Gasstreet, where Mr. Martin and Mr. Love, surgeons, promptly attended. On examination it was found that the shots had all gone off with the shattered flesh, and that the wound was of a very dangerous character. Baker is now under the care of Mr. Martin, whose opinion is that, even should the patient's life be spared, it will be some months ere he will be enabled to resume his customary calling.

about in this news item from the Bristol Mercury, September 1860.

He survived! In some censuses he is listed as a fisherman and he later became a member of the crew of the original lifeboat in Weston.

Stan Baker, his great grandson, still lives in Weston and is a Life member of the Family History Society. When he saw the photo of quarrymen in the Exhibition Room at the Quarry he was quite sure that at least one of them was from his family. Is this the same man?



The features of the one on the right of this extract bear a remarkable similarity to his grandfather (see second picture). This would date the photograph at about 1895.

Or it might be his great uncle, Frederick Baker, (aged 14 in 1881) who worked at the quarry before being appointed as Superintendent of the Cemetery and living in the Lodge at the Bristol Road entrance.

If this dating of c1895 is correct then others in that photo might be members of the DAY family who lived in Holland Street. On the 1901 census there is James DAY aged 69, his son William aged 42 and grandson, Henry, aged 19 – all are quarrymen. Could that be Henry DAY in the centre of the extract from the photo with his father on the left? The DAY family had been connected with the Quarry for many years; a John DAY, aged 18, was killed at the Quarry in April 1844 and was buried in St John's Churchyard.

Of the other quarrymen mentioned in 1881, William TREGO had married one of the BAKER family and Robert TREGO led a particularly eventful life, turning up several times as an inmate in Axbridge Workhouse. In 1891 he was there with his wife, Sophia, and 6 children. Presumably for some reason he was unable to work and had no alternative but to enter the workhouse with his family. In 1901 Robert & Sophia are living at Milton but by 1909 they are admitted to the Workhouse again and they went in and out several times during 1910. They are both there on the 1911 census and we think ill-health was now the problem, as at one point he is described in the Workhouse records as old and infirm. He died in 1914 and is buried in Weston Cemetery.

Fred VILE was killed in this accident in the quarry in February 1886. He had been lodging since a young lad with the COUNSELL family

INQUEST.—Last evening an inquest was held at the hospital on the body of Frederick Vile, who met his death in the town quarry on Wednesday, as already reported. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death," at the same time expressing their disapproval of the hurrying system practised in the quarry, barely sufficient time being allowed to ascertain whether or not the fuse has proved an active agent.

but had been born in Taunton.

Someone else who was no longer working in the quarry at the time of the 1881 census deserves a mention. Nicholas MARKS moved to

WESTON-SUPER-MARE.

SERIOUS ACCIDENT.—Yesterday morning, Nicholas Marks was engaged in blasting stone in the town quarry, and on his going to ascertain why one of the charges that had been placed in the rocks had not ignited, it suddenly exploded, and inflicted severe injuries on the face and body of Marks, who is now an in-patient at the hospital.

Weston in the 1860s looking for work but in 1878 disaster struck.

On the 1881 census he is listed as blind – no doubt as a result of his injuries and he died in 1885.

There is a great deal more research which could be done to look at the lives of these men and their workmates. Their lives were hard but the contribution which they made to the development of this stone town is all around us.

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