

HENRY SHAW OF WESTGATE, WAKEFIELD



If you were to stand at the top of Westgate today and look at HSBC Bank you would assume that building had been there for a long time. That would be correct, the area was rebuilt at the turn of the 19th century and modified again over the years, but what of the buildings which stood there before? During the eighteenth century there would have been a series of large houses fronting onto Westgate with the long burgage plots behind stretching all the way to Back Lane. The site of the HSBC Bank consisted of two burgage plots, the one next to Thompson's Yard however only went halfway to Back Lane.

My research shows the owner and resident of the plot to the West as long ago as 1731 was Henry Shaw, an attorney. He was living here when his daughter Elizabeth was baptised in that year at the Parish Church in Wakefield. The Poll Book of 1741 shows Henry Shaw, Gent resident and voting for a Mr. Fox. By 1744 Henry is shown as employing an apprentice attorney named Godfrey. Land Tax records of 1751 show Henry on Westgate, in a large house with outbuildings. No other family occupied the plot. He paid £6 12 6 which was a considerable sum at the time. In Dec 1755 the records show another apprentice John Maw was employed. Henry was still resident in 1770, but died in February the following year.

The apprentice, John Maw was born in Belton, Lincolnshire. It may be a coincidence but Henry Shaw's next door neighbour on Westgate, an attorney called Alan Johnson, married a lady from Belton. I can only assume John Maw was recommended to Henry Shaw. The date of Alan Johnson's marriage is 1744, the same year Maw was apprenticed. I was happy to discover that John Maw married Henry Shaw's daughter Elizabeth. He inherited the property from his father-in-law. John and Elizabeth had a son, John Henry Maw

(1759 to 1826.) He is listed in the records of Cambridge University Alumni having studied at Clare College and received a BA in 1778. John Henry married Margaret Stovin in 1782 and they had at least eight children, the first being John Henry Shaw Maw and they lived in the Westgate property. After the death of his wife in 1797 he moved to the Doncaster area. By 1798 John Henry rented the Westgate property to a Mrs Myers. Soon after this the whole of this area of Westgate was demolished and rebuilding began soon after 1800.

John Henry Maw's interest in Westgate, Wakefield did continue as he bought many of the plots along the newly constructed Cheapside which of course was next door to the house of Henry Shaw. In 1801 he bought plots 15/16/17 and then in November 1801 bought plots 3/4/5/6/9/10/11/12 /13/14.

John Henry Maw died in 1826 at Belle Vue, Doncaster. He was buried in the large family Maw plot in Epworth, Lincolnshire.