

The Hobson family

John Hobson was already an established businessman and Alderman when Tapton Elms was constructed as a home for his new 18-year old wife Thyrza. They had seven children between the years 1860 to 1871. John Hobson was a prominent local figure, for example: Trustee and treasurer of the Upper Chapel of Sheffield; Trustee of the Rotherham, Uppertorpe and Doncaster Chapels; for over 30 years a member of the weekly Board of the Royal Infirmary; Treasurer of the literary and Philosophical Society, once its President; prominent member (and twice President) of the Chamber of Commerce; a member of the Town Council for 10 years. He was asked to be Mayor of Sheffield but declined due to his advanced age. John Hobson died in 1889 and Thyrza in 1919.

Bernard Hobson, the eldest son of John and Thyrza, was born in Tapton Elms in 1860, He was educated at the Rev. Thomas Howaths School in Broom Bank (near Clarkehouse Road) and later at a college in Geneva. In 1886 , at the age of 26 yrs he relinquished commerce and went to Owens College, Manchester to study geology. Following postgraduate study in Heidelberg he returned to Manchester University as a lecturer in geology, petrology and physical geography, retiring in 1912, after which he lived at no. 20 Hallamgate Rd. He never married and died in 1932, leaving £142,124 to Sheffield University.

Albert Hobson, second son of John and Thyrza born in 1861, carried on the family business interests and lived at Tapton Elms for a while after his father died. Albert was born lame and walked with difficulty, using a stick. This in no way prevented him from leading a full and active life; he was a brilliant swimmer and yachtsman as well as a business, religious and civic leader.

Albert was educated privately; he joined the family firm at Arundel Street and by the age of 21 was in full control. After seven years at the helm he amalgamated the business with that of Joseph Rodgers & Sons, where he was director until in 1893. He quit to join with his brother, Wilfred, in buying the Suffolk Works of Thomas Turner & Co. Ltd. The pair later acquired two other local firms, Wingfield Rowbotham and Haywood's, and the new group made a big impact with the production of saws, files, scissors, razors and table and pocket cutlery. He moved into steel in 1891 with his election to the board of William Jessop & Sons, of which he later became chairman.

Albert Hobson's personal life was marred by tragedy. He married his wife Maude in 1890 and they had two sons, Alan and Leslie, born in 1893 and 1896. Maude died in childbirth when Leslie was born; she was just 26 years old. Albert outlived both of his sons who lost their lives within one year of each other in the first world war. Alan was killed in Belgium in 1915 at the age of 19, and Leslie in France in 1916 (age 23).

Despite these events he was one of the great characters who dominated the Sheffield Scene in the late 19th century and the first two decades of the present century. He was said to be the finest and most fluent public speaker in Sheffield; his financial genius was such that the Government called upon him as an adviser in economics during the 1914-18 war. He was knighted in the New Years honours of 1922, little more than a year before his death. He also

served as Lord Mayor in 1911, Master Cutler and president of the Chamber of Commerce both nationally and locally; Pro-Chancellor of Sheffield University from 1916- 1923; and a Town Trustee from 1917- 1923.

Following Thyrza Hobson's death the family sold Tapton Elms in 1919 to the University of Sheffield. The house became the University's first hall of residence, Stephenson Hall. Albert's brother Wilfred continued to live at number 24 Taptonville Road and had the use of the gardens of Tapton Elms until his own death in 1944, following which the University acquired the entire site.