

A note on the Le Mare family in the English silk industry
by Peter H. Le Mare.

Introduction

Members of the Le Mare family were active in the English silk industry for about 200 years; the last member of the family to own a business was Frederick Le Mare whose business passed from the family when he died in 1908.

Assembling information on the family has been helped by earlier accounts written by Richard Le Mare (1814-1893), who owned a silk business in Manchester, and by Joseph P Consterdine (1886-1921) who married Annie Le Mare (1834-1896), daughter of Ebenezer Robert Le Mare (1797-1881), an elder brother of Richard, who had silk businesses in Manchester, Macclesfield and Leigh. The information provided by the earlier histories has been augmented by investigation of public records in London, Manchester and Leigh.

The first member of the family named in the histories was Robert (1734-1794). The record of his admission to the Weavers' Company states that he was the son of Samuel Le Mare and the International Genealogical Index (IGI) records Robert being baptized in April 1735, the son of Samuel and Elisabeth Le Mare. Samuel's indenture (No CFI/526 in the City of London Records Office) is dated 1731 and records his father as Peter Le Mare, weaver. A transcript of the indenture is appended to this note. Samuel Le Maire was born in Dean and Flower Street, the son of Pierre and Anne Le Maire, and baptized at the French Church in Threadneedle Street in 1703 (Hug. Soc. Quarto Ser. 16, part III, 237n). The IGI records the marriage of a Pierre Le Maire to Anne Jackson at St Mary Magdelene Old Fish Street on 22 April 1697. There is no evidence that they were the parents of Samuel but possibly Pierre married an English woman in this church and their children were baptized in the French church in Threadneedle Street. This occurred in other Huguenot families as reported by T G L Landon in a paper on his family (Proc. Hug. Soc. 25, (4) 328).

The name

Richard Le Mare's history states that the name was originally spelt Le Maire, as in French, but that the i was dropped soon after the family settled in Spitalfields, London. This statement is supported by entries in old documents. Initially the name appeared with the i, then with and without it and ultimately without the i. We do not know why the i was dropped. Possibly it was a conscious change by the family, or it may have occurred as a mistake by an English clerk when he completed documents. Early French Protestant church entries normally included the i, but documents of the Company of Weavers excluded it. Most members of the family now spell the name as Le Mare; the exception is the family descended from Harold Huguenot Lemaire who emigrated to Canada in 1906. The clerk who prepared his homestead papers spelt the name as one word with the i. Harold had difficulty correcting it; he decided that it was not important so did not pursue the matter.

The first generation

Pierre Le Maire (dates not known)

We know little about Pierre and Anne other than that they were the parents of Jean (bap. 1701) and Samuel (bap. 1703) and that they lived in Flower and Dean Street. However, in the library of the Huguenot Society of London there is a transcription by George B. Beeman (MSS Box VII, envelope 6j) from the Lambeth Palace library of "Accounts of several sums of money received from ArchBp (sic) Tenison, and how same was distributed among the distressed weavers of Spitalfields. 1707." One of the entries is

- No 71. Peter Le Maire, weaver, against ye Gun & Tent in Flower & Dean St, Spittlefields, a wife and 7 children, very poor. In bread and money.....5/-

At the foot of the transcription Beeman wrote:

This is headed:-

Rec^d Jan. ye 31 1709 by the hand of the Most Rev^d Father in God Thomas, Lord Arch.Bishop of Canterbury.

Thirty Guineas for ye poor distressed weavers, inhabitants in & about Spittlefields in ye parish of St. Dunstons, Stepney.

Possibly Peter immigrated directly from France. However, Waller's *Extracts from the Court Books of the*

Weavers' Company (Hug. Soc. Quarto Series **33**) record on p25 "Peter Le Maire, having lived here 15 years and used the weavers trade admitted a foreign master - £5 16 Nov 1668". Also, on p43 "Peter Lemare, who served in Holland, is attested by James Tenell, for. w., and was admitted for. j. 10 May 1675".

Other information, (Huguenot Society Quarto Series **13**), refers to persons named Pierre Le Maire. Firstly, (p185d) a Pierre Le Maire was baptized on 6 December 1674 at the French Church, Threadneedle Street. His parents were Barthelemy Le Maire and Marie Blanchard who were married at Threadneedle Street on 26 December 1670. Barthelemy's parents were Pierre Le Maire and Jeanne Billo, a native of Sedan. Secondly, (p213b) a Pierre Le Maire was baptized at Threadneedle Street on 2 June 1667, the son of Pierre Le Maire and Madelaine Gellée. We do not know which, if any, of these were our ancestors and we do not know when they arrived in England, whether directly from France or via Holland.

The second generation

Samuel Le Mare (1703-59)

Neither of the family histories recorded the names of generations before Robert (1734-1794) but, as stated above, he is recorded by the International Genealogical Index (IGI) as being baptized at Christ Church Spitalfields in April 1735 the son of Samuel and Elisabeth Le Mare. We have no information on Samuel's elder brother, Jean nor of other children.

Although the family histories do not record Samuel by name, they state that Robert's father married a French woman who had three or four husbands and lived to be 92. We do not know whether her other husbands were before or after Samuel, or both. Samuel had two sons, Samuel and Robert, and two daughters, Anne and Martha. We know only of Robert (1734-1794) in the silk industry.

A transcription of Samuel's indenture is in Appendix II.

The third generation

Robert Le Mare (1734-1794)

Robert was admitted to the Freedom of the City of London by Patrimony in the Weavers' Company on 17 Dec 1759. The record of his admission (CFI/855) shows the date of admission, 23 March 1731, of his father, Samuel; 26 is written below the date indicating that Robert was 26 when he applied. This is consistent with Samuel being an ancestor of the present family. Robert's name appears for many years in the Weavers' Company Quarterage reports; in 1793-4 he was Upper Beadle and in 1794-5 recorded "dead". He died at his home in Peter Street, St Botolphs Bishopsgate, having formerly lived in Hunt Street, Mile End New Town.

Robert's will records that his wife's name was Elizabeth; Richard's history records that she was a French woman and that they worshipped at the French Church in Artillery Lane. In his will Robert named his friends Peter Le Mare, mathematical instrument maker of Tooley Street, and Thomas Dunn, weaver of Norton Folgate, as his trustees. I do not know whether Peter Le Mare was related to Robert - the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary records kinsman or near relative as an early meaning of 'friend'. We know little of this Peter Le Mare except that his name appears for many years in the Quarterage Reports. Possibly he was the Peter Le Maire whose indenture (CFI/807) states that he was the son of Peter Le Maire of the parish of St Matthew Bethnal Green, weaver. He was apprenticed to Daniel Hale, citizen and weaver, for seven years from 5 Sept 1748. He was admitted in October 1755. Perhaps he had a mechanical aptitude and moved into mathematical (or as we would say today, scientific) instrument making, possibly after having been involved with the maintenance of looms.

The fourth generation

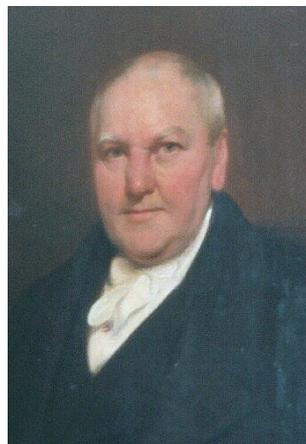
Robert (1767-?); Samuel (1770-1840); Joshua (1772-1847); James (1774-1838).

Robert I (1734-94) and Elizabeth had four sons of whom the eldest, Robert II (1767-?), was educated at Christ's Hospital and became a schoolmaster. Nevertheless, he was admitted to the Freedom by patrimony in 1790. He was entered in the Quarterage Reports as a schoolmaster. Robert II married twice, first to Elizabeth Prestage in 1790 and second in 1798 to Mary Garthwaite, whom the IGI records indicate was a relative of Robert (II). The Quarterage Report for 1797-98 gives Robert's address as Great Poultny Street, Soho. We do not know whether Mary was related to Anna Maria Garthwaite (1690-1763), the silk designer, but Mrs Rosemary Weinstein of the

Museum of London suggested that possibly Mary was a ward of Anna Maria, who did not marry, or of another member of the family, and took the surname. However, Anna Maria died in 1763 aged 73; it seems unlikely that she would have undertaken to be guardian of Mary shortly before she died. If Mary was in ward much earlier she would have been considerably older than Robert. The IGI indicates that Robert and Mary had a son, Augustus, in 1802.

Samuel (1770-1840), the second son of Robert I was a weaver of Hackney Row. He was admitted to the Weavers' Company in 1791; in 1794-6 he was under beadle and in 1796-8 upper beadle. The Quarterage Report for 1810-11 gives his address as 4 Elder Street and shows he was then still upper beadle. Kent's Post Office Directories for 1810 to 1813 list Le Mare & Co., Harness Makers, of 4 Elder Street, Spitalfields. Harness is the apparatus in a loom by which the sets of warp threads are shifted alternately to form the shed, through which the shuttle passes. Samuel's seventh child, born in 1802, was named Anna Maria, possibly indicating a link with the Garthwaites mentioned above.

The third and fourth sons of Robert (I) and Elizabeth were Joshua (1772-1847) and James (1774-1838). Richard's history records that they, like Samuel were put to silk weaving. However, Pigot & Co's Directory for 1836 records James Le Mare as a shopkeeper in Wick Street Hackney; we have no record of him in the silk industry.



Joshua Le Mare

Richard states in his history that his father, Joshua, told him that his education cost one shilling, for he went to school for only three weeks at four pence per week. Joshua taught himself to read and write. As a lad he was taken from the loom and sent to work in a haberdashers in the West End of London but after a few years he returned to silk weaving when he met Sarah Easto, whom he later married. To prepare for marriage he worked from 4 in the morning until late at night and so made good wages. Richard reports that for a considerable time he wove white velvet which required very careful and delicate manipulation. Richard described the process thus:

Hand loom velvets are woven by throwing a fine wire with a groove in it across the warp; the wire is woven in to hold it fast and then a sharp instrument is run along the groove, which cuts the silk and this forms the pile. The wire is then liberated and the operation is repeated 40 to 50 times in an inch. This requires great skill, for if the knife should slip out of the groove the warp would be cut out, which would involve serious damage and loss.

Despite earning good wages times were difficult. Provisions were dear because of poor harvests and the duty on imported corn, and the war in France caused increased taxation. Joshua considered leaving silk weaving and taking a job with the East India Company but a friend dissuaded him. Some time later he was offered a post as foreman in the warehouse of an established silk manufacturer at a salary which advanced to £300 p.a. After the death of the head of the concern, Mr Crelland, Joshua established his own silk business at about the time that Richard was born in Blossom Street, Norton Folgate, in 1814. The business was successful and grew rapidly; it continued in London for over forty years and expanded to Manchester.

Joshua married Sarah Easto at St Olave Old Jewry in 1793. They are reported to have had eleven children but we have records of only seven; the other four children may have died in infancy. Three of the sons, Joshua

Richard, Ebenezer Robert and Richard, went into the silk industry.

Joshua was admitted to the Freedom in 1793. Pigot & Co's Directories for 1817 and 1823 record Joshua Le Mare & Son, Silk Manufacturers, 18 Steward Street. Later Joshua moved to Spital Square; Pigot's Directory for 1836 and other publications give the number as 27, but the family history records 28. Possibly as the business grew Joshua and his family occupied both houses or, perhaps more likely, the family record is wrong. The census of 1841, seen in the Public Records Office, Chancery Lane, does not record a Le Mare living at 27 Spital Square but records Lancaster Richard who witnessed Joshua's will. The census of 1851 records Maria Fox who was Joshua's housekeeper whom he mentioned in his will. In neither census was anyone known to be associated with Le Mares recorded at 28 Spital Square. The family seems, therefore, to have occupied only 27 Spital Square.

The business seems to have been successful and Sir Frank Warner in *The Silk Industry of the United Kingdom* records that Le Mare & Sons of 27 Spital Square exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851. The *London Gazette* of 17 October 1851 records that the company won a prize medal for Black and coloured Velvets, Satins, Moiré, and Glacé Silks.

Joshua's will shows that when he died he had premises in Spital Square, a factory and warehouse in Blossom Street, and power looms and other machinery in Manchester. I have a portrait of him, in oils, 90 x 70 cm, in an ornate gilt frame; I do not know the name of the artist. He died at his home in Spital Square in 1847 and was interred in Bunhill Fields but his grave was one of those destroyed by a bomb during the war of 1939-45.

The fifth generation

Isaac Dunn (1797-1885); John Paul (1804-1858); Josiah Robert (1806-?); Joshua Richard (1796-1864); Ebenezer Robert (1797-1881); Richard (1814-1893).

Three sons of Samuel (1770-1840) were in the silk trade. Records in the Public Records Office and *London Gazette* show that Isaac Le Mare and John Prestage were declared bankrupt in 1828 (N. Rothstein Proc. Hug. Soc. 25. 440, 446. 1993). Isaac's wife was Lydia Prestage so presumably John Prestage was related. However, Pigot's Directory for 1836 records that Isaac was a galloon and ribbon manufacturer, trading as Le Mare and Gooch in Little Love Lane. Perhaps Gooch assisted Isaac to discharge the bankruptcy. In 1846 the P.O. Directory recorded Isaac D. Le Mare, Galloon manufacturer, 38 Basinghall Street. However, in later directories he was recorded as a shoe mercer and leather merchant, and Harold J Le Mare recorded that Isaac Dunn Le Mare was a wholesale calico merchant and had a warehouse. His brother John Paul is recorded in 1836 and 1846 as a shoe mercer, haberdasher, and button and trimming seller of 108 Houndsditch. Their younger brother, Josiah Robert, was recorded in Pigot's Directory for 1836 as a cane spreader of Green Street, Globe Fields. Warner (*The Silk Industry of the United Kingdom*) describes beaming or cane spreading as the transfer of the warp from the warping mill to the back roller of the loom; work requiring great care and exactitude.

Galloon is a narrow close woven ribbon or braid used for trimming clothes and shoes. It seems that as this trade diminished Isaac and his brother extended their businesses to include other products. We have no records of any of the sons of these brothers being employed in businesses concerned with silk.

The sons of Joshua maintained his success in the silk industry. His eldest son, Joshua Richard (1796-1864) entered the business after some elementary education and was sent to an evening school. He was admitted to the Freedom in 1819, by patrimony. The second child, Ebenezer Robert (1797-1881) received his education at a school in Devonshire Street, Bishopsgate. Initially he worked in a bank in Guildford but when he married in 1823 he entered the family business and lived in the family house in Steward Street, his father and mother moving to a house at Kingsland.

In 1829 Ebenezer Robert moved to Manchester to establish a silk business there. The *London Gazette* of 1 September 1829 announced the dissolution by mutual consent of the partnership of Joshua, Joshua Richard and Ebenezer Robert Le Mare (see appendix III). Joshua Richard continued the business of Joshua Le Mare and Sons in Spitalfields; his brother Richard (1814-1893) having joined the business in 1827 when he left school. Richard was admitted to the Freedom in 1835, when he reached the age of 21. I have the certificate of his Freedom.



Ebenezer Robert Le Mare

In 1840 Joshua Richard visited his brother Ebenezer Robert in Manchester and was so impressed with the activity and extent of the opportunities there that he advised that the family should open a warehouse. This was agreed and in November that year Richard with his wife and family went to Manchester. The address of the warehouse is recorded as York Street and Spring Gardens; possibly it was at the junction of these two streets.

Joshua Richard maintained the business in Spital Square, and probably supplied the Manchester warehouse from there. Warner in *The Silk Industry* states that in about 1860 J R Le Mare & Sons "attempted to start a factory at Dover for the manufacture of velvets but found that a military town was not suitable". This seems to be the last reference to the company in London and the south of England. Joshua Richard died at Melbourne Terrace, Seven Sisters Road, in 1864.

Richard gives little information in his history about his own activities in the business but one of his sons



Richard Le Mare

Ebenezer (1848-1939) recalled, in an autobiographical newspaper article (*Fleetwood Chronicle, Fylde News and Advertiser*, Friday 9 Sept 1932) his pleasure at hearing that his father's firm, J Le Mare & Sons, had won a prize for silk at the London International Exhibition of 1862.

The businesses in Manchester flourished. Ebenezer Robert opened a mill at Bedford, near Leigh in 1839; in 1858 a mill was commenced in Brewery Lane. However, Alan Dutton states in *The End of an Era – a history of Bedford Church Primary School* that Richard Le Mare opened the mill in Brewery Lane, Bedford and that in its heyday it employed 1000 people. Although Ebenezer Robert may have opened the mill Richard certainly managed it for a time. A throwing mill (where raw silk was twisted into threads) was opened in Macclesfield; and he was in partnership with a Mr Symonds in a print works at Handforth, Cheshire. He left the partnership Symonds, Cunliffe & Co. in July 1851 (*London Gazette*). At various times Ebenezer Robert was in partnership with others. The *London Gazette* reported the dissolution of the partnership with James Cummings in May 1830, and that with J.E. Lane in November 1850.

Warner (*op.cit.*) records that Ebenezer Robert was one of 27 signatories to a Memorial to Benjamin Disraeli,

Chancellor of the Exchequer, dated 10 Nov 1852. The memorial drew attention to the depressed state of the trade in broad silks, which they manufactured. They considered that the depression was attributable to the limited foreign demand for their goods and that this was caused by the protective duty imposed on foreign goods, which created the impression in world markets that England was unable to compete with continental manufacturers, so that the trade was almost entirely in the hands of Swiss and French competitors. The signatories called for the immediate repeal of the duty. Four manufacturers did not sign. One, John Morley, said he declined to sign his own death warrant. At the time that Warner wrote (about 1920) only Morley's business survived and was carried on at Patricroft by Messrs Robinson and Millington.

Ebenezer Robert was active in Manchester society. He was Justice of the Peace; a member of many church societies, and treasurer and later vice-president of Manchester Royal Infirmary.

The sixth generation

Samuel (1839-1925); Alfred (1843-1917); Frederick (1853-1908)

Ebenezer Robert had two sons, neither of whom went into the business. One died of scarlet fever at Rossall School; the other, also educated at Rossall, was in the paper trade and for a time lived in Tokyo.

Both Samuel and Frederick joined the family business. Frederick went to the mill at Leigh in 1870 and remained there until he died in 1908 when the business passed out of the family. Samuel seems to have maintained the Manchester part of the business in partnership with Mr George Griffin of St Paul's Churchyard, London, until he moved to Sherborne, Dorset, where the silk business of Messrs Willmott had closed in 1887 but was reopened within a few months by the Rev. Joseph Ogle, Samuel's brother-in-law. Ogle invited Samuel to manage the mill and the Sherborne Museum records that "Only a decade passed before Sherborne became renowned worldwide ... and an order was received for flowered silk for Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee".



Alfred



Frederick

My grandfather Alfred, was employed in the business for about twenty years. When he was 17 he was employed as a warehouseman and, from census records seems to have remained in this position until about 1881 when the census records him as Agent (silk). The Manchester Rate Books for 1876 record him as a silk manufacturer living at 12 Plymouth Square, a house owned by a Thomas Broadbent. In 1891 he was a cashier and later company secretary with O'Hanlon & Co., Ltd, described as upholsterers and warehousemen. Alfred seems to have left the family business at about the time Samuel moved to Sherborne.

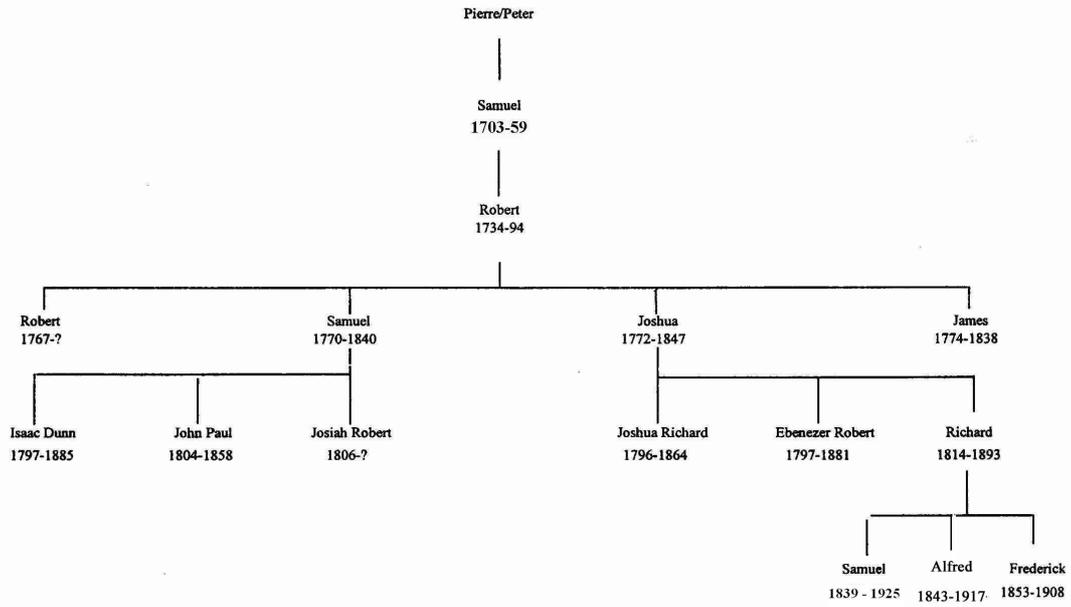
Conclusion

Although the contribution of the Le Mare family to the English silk industry was small compared with some other Huguenot families it grew successfully during 200 years. The family demonstrated many of the characteristics of Huguenot immigrants who arrived in England with little but their religious faith and determination to make an honest and successful living. At times the family was affected by the problems which threatened the silk industry as a whole. The sons of Joshua met these by moving out of London to Manchester and neighbouring towns. The sons of his brothers remained in London where their smaller businesses declined so they moved into other activities, before their cousins and nephews in the north-west of England left the silk industry.

- This note is a revision of one that was published in *Huguenot Families* Number 5, September 2001 (London: The Huguenot Society of Great Britain & Ireland)

Appendix I

The Le Mare Family in the English silk industry



Appendix II

Indenture of Samuel Le Mare (1703-1759)

This indenture witnesseth, That Samuoll Le Mare, Son of Peter Le Mare Spittle fields weaver doth put himself Apprentice to John Bennet, citizen and weaver of London and with him (after the manner of an Apprentice) to serve from the Day of the Date hereof, unto the full End and Term of Seven Years, from thence next following, to be fully compleat and ended. During which Term, the said Apprentice his said Master faithfully shall serve, his Secrets keep, his lawful commandments every where gladly do. He shall do no damage to his paid Master, nor fee it to be done of others, but that he to his power shall lett, or forthwith give warning to his said Master of the same. He shall not waste the Goods of his said Master, nor lend them unlawfully to any. He shall not commit Fornication, nor contract Matrimony within the said Term. He shall not play at Cards, Dice, Tables, or any other unlawful Games, whereby his Master may have any loss. With his own Goods or others, during the said Term, without Licence of his said Master, he shall neither buy nor sell. He shall not haunt Taverns or Play-houses, or absent himself from his said Master's Service Day or Night unlawfully But in all things as a faithful Apprentice he shall behave himself towards his said Master, and all his, during the said Term. And the said Master

—his said Apprentice, in the same Art which he useth, by the best means that he can, shall teach and instruct, or cause to be taught and instructed, finding unto his said Apprentice Meat, Drink, Apparel, Lodging, and all other Necessaries, according to the Custom of the City of London, during the said Term. And for the true Performance of all and every said Covenants and Agreements, either of the said Parties bindeth himself unto the other by these Presents. In Witness whereof, the Parties above named to these Indentures interchangeably have put their Hands and Seals, the xviii Day of January Anno Dom. 1719 and in the Sixth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George, King of Great Britain, &c.

[three stamps of VI pence each]

The Mark of

Sam^u Le Mare

On the reverse side:

p Jas Dandy Weaver
21 March 1731
Sam^u Wright
Warden.

Note by PHL

21 March 1731 was presumably the date of Samuel's admission to the Weavers' Company. Until 1752 the year ended in March.

Having been apprenticed on 18 January 1719 he thus served twelve years apprenticeship, or there was a period after completion before being admitted to the Weavers' Company.

The Indenture is in the Corporation of London Record Office file CFI/526.

Samuel's admission to the Weaver's Company also admitted him to the Freedom of the City of London (See Vivienne E. Aldous: *The Archives of the Freedom of the City of London 1681-1915* – Genealogists' Magazine **23** (4) 255-266, 1989). Descendants of Samuel who were Freemen were admitted by patrimony.

Appendix III

NOTICE is hereby given, that the Partnership heretofore subsisting between us the undersigned, Joshua Le Mare, Joshua Richard Le Mare, and Ebenezer Robert Le Mare, of Spital-Square, in the County of Middlesex, Silk-Manufacturers, is this day dissolved by mutual consent, as far only as regards the said Ebenezer Robert Le Mare.—All debts due by and owing to the said Partnership will be paid and received by the said Joshua Le Mare and Joshua Richard Le Mare.—Dated the 28th day of August 1829.

Joshua Le Mare.

Joshua Richard Le Mare.

Ebenezer Robert Le Mare

From London Gazette 1 Sept 1829 Issue 18607 p 1632.