

Bakers

OF CODSALL AND BONINGALE



Judy Davies

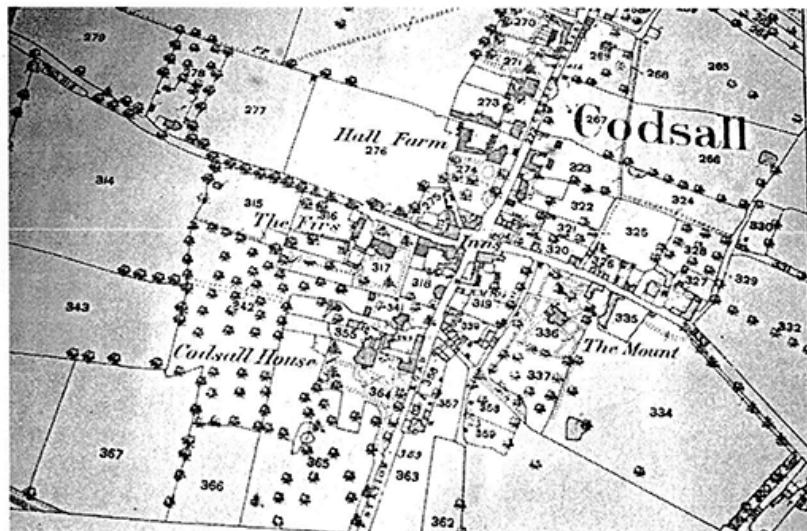
CODSALL & BILBROOK HISTORY SOCIETY



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Hull Farm (shown top centre on this 1884 map) became Bakers Nursery in 1901

The period of the First World War must have been a difficult time at the Nursery. Maybe this is why there was an agreement in 1919 between Frank Gaskell of Pendrell Hall and Stanley Baker for some land to be sold to Mr Gaskell and then leased back again. As their seeds became well known Baker's started producing specialist price lists. There was one by 1923, and maybe before, just for seeds. In 1926 a price list for roses and fruit trees was distributed.

The very early catalogues consisted only of printed pages, usually of very thick paper. By the middle of the Twenties it was obviously considered a good idea to have the picture of someone who looked like a good gardener on the cover. In 1926 Tom Bright, a round-faced, florid gentleman in a check cap, appears with the slogan 'Come with me!' From then on, for the next few years, he is to be found on, or in, almost every sales publication. The fascinating thing is that Tom Bright did not work for Baker's. He was an employee of the Gaskells at Pendrell Hall, Codsall Wood, about a mile away. Each time a new catalogue was being put together Tom would be invited down to have his photograph taken in a new pose. He obviously epitomised the idea of an old-fashioned gardener whose plants, seeds and handy hints would bring unqualified success.

A feature of the 1920s catalogues was the pages of information on growing vegetables. Were people now becoming interested in providing food for the table and buying the seed from Bakers if given a little encouragement?



A friendly note on Garden matters published periodically by
BAKERS—the Seed, Plant and Flower people.

VOL. I. No. 1.

THE SEED & FLOWER FARM, CODSALL.

MAR. 1929

THE GREAT FREEZE!

Having been trimmed as close as the shorn lamb by the great frost which stopped all but outgoings for nearly a month, we welcome the distinct signs of thaw—mild but still distinct that are in their second day at the time of writing this note and which we hope will have completely routed the frost by the time this little message of goodwill from Bakers to you finds its way into your hands.

NOW—COATS OFF!



It has to be done and the sooner the better—**DIGGING**. It comes hard after a winter by the fire-side and it will most likely mean stiff muscles and blistered hands. But it has to be done—and at there it

The Depression Years of the late Twenties and early Thirties must have had their impact upon the Nursery trade. In 1931 a five-year lease was agreed on under which land was leased from Mr Gaskell at Pendrell Hall between 1932 -1937 and renewed in 1938 when the signatories were Mr Gaskell and the directors of Bakers', named as Norman Thomas Baker, James Stanley Baker and Arthur William Evans (accountant). Further capital was also required in 1933 and 40 acres of land at Codsall were sold to Frank Gaskell of Pendrell Hall and then leased back from him.



Tom Bright is here again to introduce to you the most comprehensive offer ever made to allotment-holders and gardeners.

BAKERS "V" COLLECTION

of VEGETABLE SEEDS

for a 10-rod allotment or kitchen garden.

based on the recommendations of the Royal Horticultural Society in its new publication "The Vegetable Garden Displayed."

Carr. **24/-** Paid.

Or, including 14 lbs. of Early and 28 lbs. of Maincrop Potatoes.

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For Those Who Have No Means of Raising Seedlings in Heat.

we can supply for delivery early in June

50 Bakers' Giant White Celery plants and 18 Essex Wonder Tomato plants for an additional sum of

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BEANS, BROAD, INVINCIBLE LONGPOD	pint.
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BRUSSELS SPROUTS, FAVOURITE	"
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CARROT, EARLY SCARLET HORN	oz.
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" BEDFORDSHIRE CHAMPION	"
PARSNIP, MOSS CURLED	pkt.
PARSNIP, GOLIATH	oz.
PEAS, TIP TOPPER	pint.
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RADISH, GEM	oz.
SHALLOTS, RED	lb.
SPINACH, FREEDOM	oz.
" PRICKLY	"
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TURNIP, EARLY SNOWBALL	oz.
" GREEN TOP STONE	"
VEGETABLE MARROW, LONG GREEN	pkt.

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of **CODSALL**,
WOLVERHAMPTON.

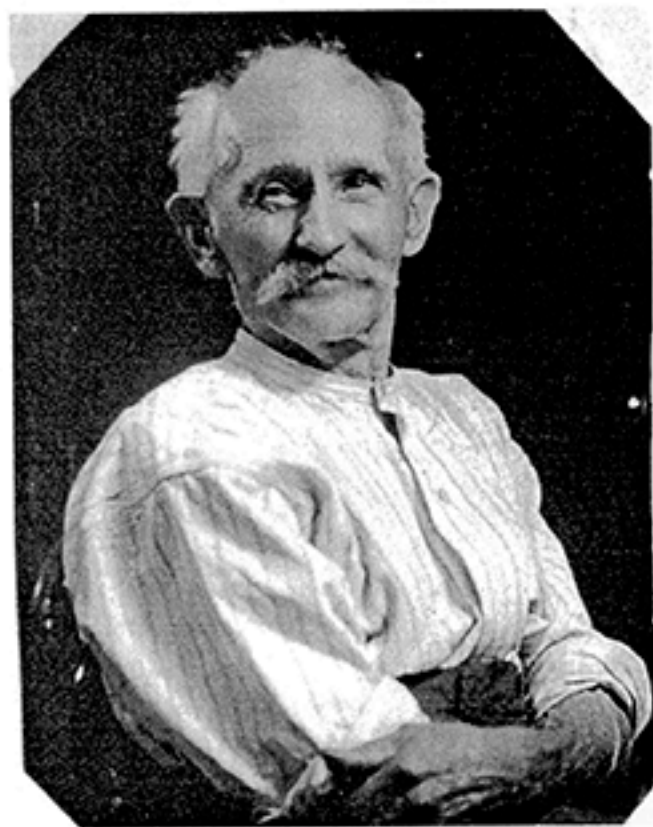
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The Complete Collection of Seeds, Potatoes, Celery plants and Tomato plants - Carr. Paid **48/6**

CHAPTER 8

GEORGE RUSSELL AND THE RUSSELL LUPINS

The information about George Russell which follows comes from a booklet called "The Russell Lupin" written by Ronald Parret. He compiled his information with the help of James Baker, the owner of the Codsall Nursery where George's Lupins went on sale to the public, and Mr Mills and Mr Moody, senior employees of the Nursery.



No story about Bakers Nursery can be complete without mentioning George Russell in some detail, as the fortunes and reputation of the nursery from the end of the 1930s onwards must have revolved to some degree around this very special plantsman. It is due to his work that the lupin became transformed into the Russell Lupins which became famous throughout the world.

George Russell was not a local man. From his birth certificate dated 1857 we learn that he was born in Stillington in Yorkshire. Most of his life was spent in York where he earned his living as a jobbing gardener. His wife did not enjoy good health so he preferred a job which enabled him to have time off when it was needed.

There is a story that it was in 1911, at the age of 55 that George was inspired by a vase of flowers in the home of one of his favourite employers, a

Mrs Micklethwaite. In the vase were the common blue, white and pale pink varieties of 'lupinus polyphyllus'. Looking at them George thought that it would be possible to make some improvements. He began to grow them in earnest on his allotment. As time went on he ran out of space and had to overflow into a second allotment.

He planted seed obtained from sources all over the world and perhaps fate took a hand here because some came from an annual lupin from Germany. The seed carried the ability, with the help of pollination by the bees, to introduce a range of brilliant new colours. The drawback was that by introducing annuals there could always be a throwback amongst the perennial lupins to this trait. For the following 14 years he meticulously planted, discarded and saved the seed of the most successful plants. Never, it seems, did he cross-propagate or take root cuttings.

His allotments began to attract admiring glances.



George in his allotment in Yorkshire