

Flavel of Leamington Spa, Warwickshire

In 1829, Sidney Flavel's father William invented the 'Leamington Kitchener', a new cooking range which laid the foundations of a manufacturing business which survives to the present day. Sidney Flavel was born in Coventry in 1819 into an ancient family one of whose members fought at Agincourt. He took charge of the family business on the death of his father in 1844 inheriting an iron foundry and extensive factory premises in south Leamington. A highly astute businessman, he exhibited the Flavel 'Kitchener' at the Great Exhibition in 1851 and opened prestigious London showrooms in Welbeck Street. A first-rate product allied to Sidney Flavel's shrewd marketing skills ensured the rapid expansion of the company and the famous 'Kitchener' stove was ordered for Royal Palaces, stately homes, military and naval establishments, prisons and premises of every sort throughout Great Britain. Some stoves were shipped to Australia. The Flavel company became the largest employer in Leamington for much of the 19th century.

Continuing ill health prevented Sidney Flavel from entering public life or playing a part in local affairs but he was reportedly a kindly man and a great supporter of Leamington. When the town's new Post Office was built in 1870 he purchased the Doric columns that had formerly stood at the entrance to the old Bath Street Post Office and erected them in front of Edgeville House (now Flavel House) where they remain to this day.

He died on 31st of March 1892 at the age of 72. He was one of the oldest inhabitants of Leamington. Few had seen greater changes in the town and few could so vividly recount tales of early Leamington. He and his wife are buried in the family vault in Leamington Cemetery.

With thanks to Dr Christine Hodgetts.

In November 2011 a blue plaque was unveiled at the former home of Sidney Flavel Senior, (1819-1892), in Newbold Terrace, Leamington Spa. The guests included Sidney Flavel's great-great grandson Mike Wilmot, Rangemaster chief executive William McGrath and Leamington Spa mayor Cllr. Alan Wilkinson who unveiled the plaque.



The Flavel Dynasty by Richard Storey

William

(1779-1844)

Coventry Ironworker & Iron Works.

Branch in Leamington Spa in 1803.

Did not patent the 'Kitchener'.

Sidney

(1819-1892)

Blue Plaque Subject.

Sidney Smith

(1846-1931)

Learned foundry work in Horseley Works, Tipton, Staffs.

Began work in the Leamington Foundry in 1867.

Taken into partnership in 1868.

Flavel's moved into gas stove manufacturing in 1880's.

Became sole proprietor on father's death.

Converted business into a private limited company in 1902, absorbing rival, breakaway Imperial Foundry.

Remained chairman until his death.

Extensive civic involvement: 6 times mayor of Leamington Spa, Warks CC member, Magistracy, Freemason, All Saints vicar's warden, Leamington Conservative Club, NSPCC.

Sidney

(1879-1904)

Briefly joint managing director but died in a car accident in 1904.

Gilbert

Followed a naval career.

(died 1939)

Became a director in 1911.

Managing Director and majority shareholder in 1916.

Became chairman after his father died in 1931.

Probably as a result of his initiative the iron foundry moved to Imperial Works in 1921.

New cupolas built in 1924 but modern cookers did not enter production until after his father's death in 1931.

