

at a low ebb, and the foreman, John Jones, was contemplating enlisting as a soldier in the Civil War in the United States. With effect from 14 February 1863 Samuelson appointed as manager Thomas Corbett (1843-1917), the nineteen-year-old son of Samuel Corbett, a Wellington ironmonger, on which behalf he may initially have acted.⁴ Thomas Corbett had hoped to make his career as a shorthand writer in parliament, but an injury to his right hand when he was fourteen frustrated his ambition. He had great business ability – it was said that ‘as a salesman few could excel him’. On New Year’s Day 1864 purchased the business from Samuelson.⁵ He sold 73 Samuelson reaping machines in the summer season of 1864, and 88 in the following year. In July 1867 he staged a public trial of a Samuelson mower against one made by Hornsby of Grantham, and sold seven machines the same day.⁶ In 1865 Corbett began to manufacture agricultural implements. In 1867 he exhibited his ‘Eclipse’ winnower at the Royal Show at Bury St. Edmunds, and began to manufacture ploughs the following year. In 1869 he purchased a builder’s yard that became the nucleus of an extensive range of buildings that still stands in Castle Foregate, having been occupied since 1929 by an oil blending company.⁷ Corbett concentrated increasingly on manufacturing, and in 1871 ceased to be act for Samuelson, although he resumed the agency in 1884.⁸ Corbett developed a considerable export business. He visited Australia and South Africa in order to establish agencies, and frequently referred in speeches to conversations at agricultural shows with crowned heads. He became a leading figure in Shrewsbury, and served as the town’s mayor. His Perseverance Ironworks came to employ almost as many workers as the Britannia Works in Banbury, although his overall wealth and political status never matched that of Samuelson. As far as is known, Samuelson did not embark on retailing ventures in other parts of England. It is interesting that his three-year venture in Shrewsbury nurtured the career of another successful entrepreneur in agricultural engineering.

⁴ *Shrewsbury Chronicle* 27 March 1863; 16 Jan.1914.

⁵ *Shrewsbury Chronicle* 1 Jan 1864.

⁶ *Shrewsbury Chronicle* 8 July 1865, 11 Aug 1865, 5 July 1867.

⁷ Trinder, B., *The Industrial Archaeology of Shropshire* (1996, Chichester: Phillimore), pp. 60-1.

⁸ *Shrewsbury Chronicle* 10 Feb 1871; 11 July, 8 Aug 1884.