

Joseph Plant (1842-1910) Chemist and Comic Singer

by Suzanne Tyson-Butterworth

3 July 2021

I recently found the Obituary Notice (reproduced on the next page) of my 2 x Great Grand-uncle JOSEPH PLANT, and thought people might like to read about him. It seems he had a very interesting, varied and full life.

Joseph was born in 1842 in the Marylebone district of London, and he died in 1910 in Wolverton near Potterspury, Buckinghamshire. He was the 4th child and 3rd son of John Plant and his wife Mary nee George (bc 1811 St. Marylebone, London).

The birth place of Joseph's father John Plant (bc 1815, possibly Staffordshire though somewhere unknown) is a mystery. His baptism in 1815 took place at St. John, Burslem, Staffordshire - with the abode stated as Burlsem; but, the occupation of John's father was a Boatman. So, it is quite likely that the family lived and worked on one of the many Canal Boats/Barges of the era and would have traveled far & wide, where the work took them. John Plant died on 17.02.1867 in St. Marylebone Workhouse Infirmary, a month after he was admitted there with Chronic Paralysis. His wife Mary Plant had pre-deceased him at their home in 1863 in St. Marylebone. She died of Phthisis (TB). A very sad end for them both.

I hope you enjoy the following read of Joseph's Obituary below.

Best regards,

Suzanne

OBITUARY NOTICE OF MR. JOSEPH PLANT (1842-1910)
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DEATH OF MR. JOSEPH PLANT.—The death of Mr. Joseph Plant, which took place on Monday, Jan. 31, has removed one of the best-known and most popular and respected of Wolverton's townsmen. The deceased, who was in his 67th year, had been in failing health for some few months past, but up to the previous Wednesday had been able to be about. On that day he was compelled to take to his bed, and despite careful nursing and skilled medical attention death took place five days later from pneumonia. On coming to Wolverton 45 years ago Mr. Plant took up an appointment in the London and North-Western Railway Company's Gas Works. A few years later he was appointed chemist at the works, and that position he discharged with unusual ability up to the time of his retirement a couple of years ago. To the older students of chemistry Mr. Plant was perhaps best known. Formerly a pupil of the late Rev. F. W. Harnett, father of the present vicar of Wolverton, he showed considerable aptitude in this branch of scientific education. He became complete master of a subject, which had practically been his life study, and subsequently was given an appointment on the teaching staff of the Science and Art Institute. As a teacher of theoretical and practical chemistry he was extremely popular; he always had large classes, and his instruction was of that plain and intelligent character which never failed to produce the best results. There are many to-day holding good positions in the world of sciences who can attribute their success to nothing more than the sound training they received in their early days from Mr. Plant. As a lecturer in chemistry the deceased gentleman was in great demand. He always took a great interest in the work of the Parish Church, and besides being lay assistant to the late vicar for a long time was a valued member of the choir. In his younger days Mr. Plant was very much sought after as a comic singer. His quaint Irish songs were rendered in that inimitable style which made him a favourite wherever he went. The outstanding feature of his songs was that, unlike the comic songs of to-day, they were devoid of vulgarity, and would interest and amuse everyone who had the pleasure of hearing them. As a vocalist Mr. Plant was ever ready to give his services for any philanthropic or charitable object, and many an institution outside Wolverton have in the past benefitted very largely by the efforts deceased put forward in their behalf. For many years he also conducted a successful dancing class in the town. He was a member of the Wolverton Lodge of Odd-fellows, and frequently attended the district meetings. In politics he was a staunch Liberal, and at the recent election was able to walk to the polling booth to record his vote. The deceased leaves a wife and three sons and one daughter, and with them in their great sorrow sympathy deep and profound in its character will be extended. The funeral takes place this (Saturday) afternoon.

