

The Insleys

Joseph Thomas Insley was born in 1841 on Goldthorn Hill, Sedgely, Wolverhampton, the son of a tailor, Henry, and his wife Margaret. He was three months old at the time of the 1841 census – June 6th – so was born in March.

By the 1851 census, Henry had another wife, Lucy, and Joseph had a raft of younger siblings. They were still living on Goldthorn Hill, Sedgely.



In the 1861, 20-year-old Joseph was still living with Henry and Lucy on Goldthorn Hill, in School Lodge House, but now he had a job. He was a 'Japanner'. Wolverhampton and Bilston were the centres for japanning, the rich decoration of metal items like tea pots. At this time, 2,000 people were involved in japanning in the area. <http://www.wolverhamptonhistory.org.uk/work/industry/japanning>

By 1871, Joseph was 30 and had his own household in Wolverhampton. He was married to Maria (née Pugh) and they had three children, Edith, Arthur and Ernest. Joseph is shown as a japanner's assistant.



In the 1881 census, with Joseph 40 and Maria 37 (pronounced Maraya), they had three more children, Lilian, Thomas and Alice. All the children were shown as scholars, including 15-year-old Edith. Joseph was now a 'japanner designer', and they moved to 2, Glendale Villa, Broad Lane, Bradmore, Wolverhampton.

Joseph was also an artist, and the family story is that he was commissioned by a miller on the Welsh borders to paint his mill and the miller himself. When the painting was presented, it was rejected, as not showing enough of the miller!



Things change by 1891, which also coincides with a terminal decline in demand for Japanned items. The family were living at 73, Belmont Road, Malvern.

Joseph was now an 'ornamental japanner', and they had two more children, Bertram Oswald(?), aged 6 and Mabel, aged 3. Both are shown to have been born in Worcester (though that might include Malvern), so he was certainly in the area from about 1885.



The timing coincides with Edward Elgar living in Malvern, so it is possible that Joseph was a drinking partner of Elgar's, as the family story goes?

1857 – 1859	The Birthplace Cottage, Lower Broadheath, Worcester
1859 - 1861	1 Edgar Street, Worcester (Demolished)
1861 - 1863	2 College Precincts, Worcester
1863 – 1879	First floor above the family music shop at 10 High Street, Worcester (Demolished)
1879 – 1883	Loretto Villa, Chestnut Walk (now No.12) Worcester
1883 – 1889	4 Field Terrace, Bath Road, Worcester
1889	Briefly at 7 The Lees, Great Malvern and 4 The Lees
1889 – 1891	Houses in Kensington and Upper Norwood, London
1891 – 1899	'Forti', Alexandra Road, Malvern
1899 – 1904	'Craig Lea', 86 Wells Road, Malvern Wells (also 1898 -1903: Summer cottage at 'Birchwood Lodge' at Storridge)
1904 – 1911	'Plas Gwyn', Hampton Park Road, Hereford

And as regards the family story that he worked on the stained glass windows at Worcester Cathedral, Joseph was certainly artistic, and the japanning work might have been in decline, and there was renovation work going on in the cathedral in the 1880s and 1890s. So it is not impossible.

In 1901, they had moved to London: 7 Balfern Grove, Chiswick. Joseph and Lucy had Edith still with them, and their two youngest.

Bertram Oswald(?) could be an engineer (?) – Claire remembers her mother mentioning an Uncle Bert. Mabel was then aged 13.

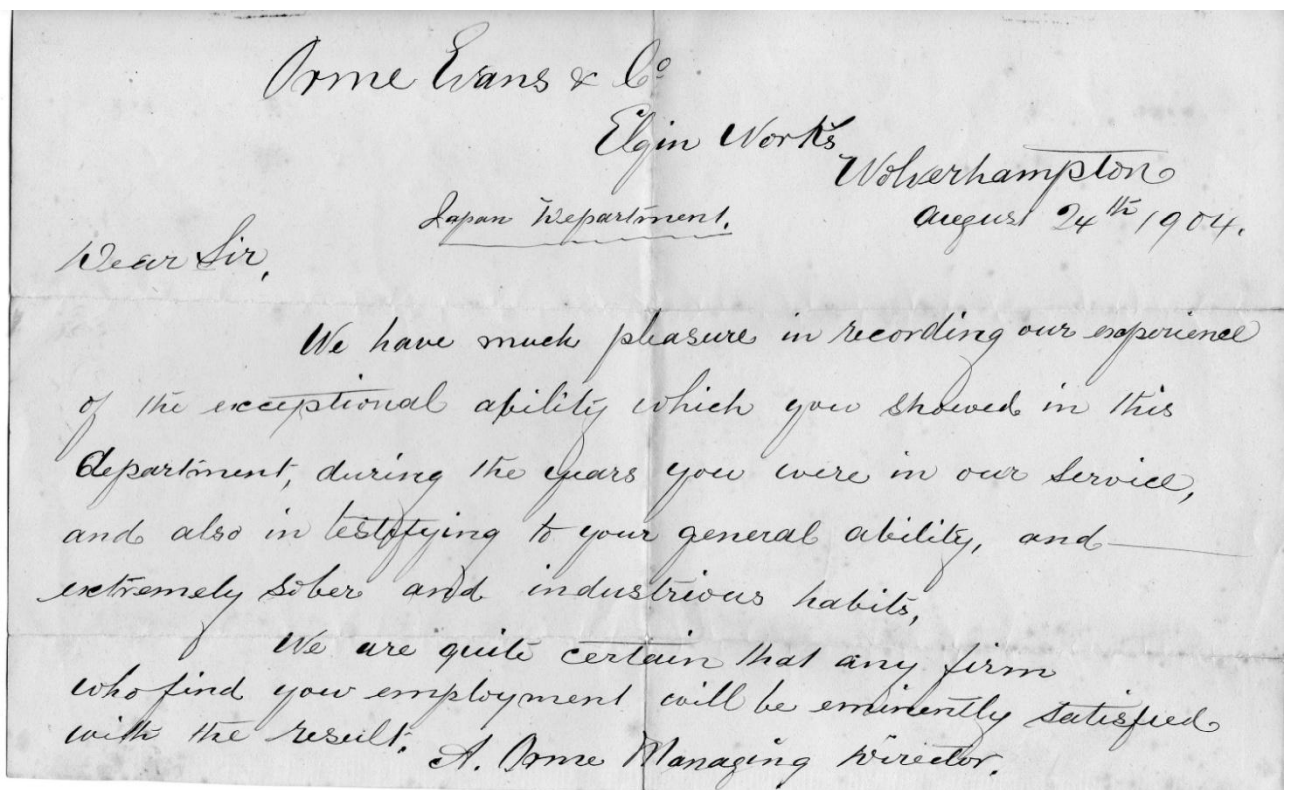


Joseph was shown as an 'Artist something – could be Silver?' which I can't read. Or perhaps he earned his trade as an artist.

Edward Elgar's addresses

Joseph J. Inghy	Dead	M	59	Artist	Wolverhampton
Maria	Wife	57			

in 1904 he was looking for a job, and sought a reference from his former japanning employers in Wolverhampton. He was clearly well thought of:



Joseph died in early 1909, just a few months before Mabel married Arkadiusz. On Mabel's wedding certificate in 1909, Joseph's job was shown as a 'decorator', with no suggestion as to what sort of decorator, but presumably not a house decorator, given Joseph's artistic skills. Her address was 71 Paxton Road, Chiswick, presumably the family home, and the house seems to still be there.