

# North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society



**NEDIAS Newsletter No. 77 – February 2020**  
**Price: £2.00 (Free to Members)**



## **The Demise of East London's Bell Foundry** **Derek Grindell**

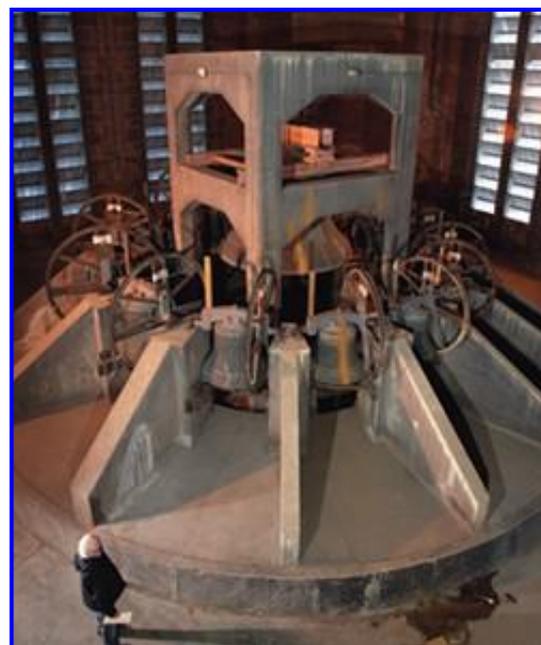
**T**he centuries-old bell foundry in the Whitechapel area of east London, which made both Big Ben and the Liberty Bell, famous for its role in the history of the United States, has closed and the business recently been sold. The premises are Grade 2\* listed and their closure on 12 June 2017 marked nearly 450 years of bell making and 250 years at its Whitechapel site. During this time it has had a long line of over 40 owners. The final bell cast was presented to the Museum of London together with other artefacts used in the manufacturing process. The previous owner of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, which claims to be the UK's oldest manufacturing company in continuous operation, claimed that the decision to cease trading was "in response to the changing realities of running a business of this kind".

Alan Hughes, whose great-great-grandfather bought the business in 1884, commented: "The business has been at its present site over 250 years so it is probably about time it moved once again. We hope that this move will provide an opportunity for the business to move forward. "The company, which was set up in 1570 in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, was at the time one of only two bell foundries in the UK. The site has cast so many bells which are still in existence on sites around the world - not least at Cromford Mill in the Derwent Valley. Others include those in St Pauls, Big Ben and Westminster Abbey.

Alan Hughes, who styled himself as both managing director and blacksmith's mate, further commented that his father anticipated that the business would close during his lifetime not least because of the operational life of bells, which by their very nature are

The Whitechapel foundry cast 14 bells for Liverpool Anglican Cathedral in the 1930's. Each bell has a unique inscription as well as a name, and all, apart from the Tenor Bell, are taken from the Prayer Book version of Psalms (Old Testament). The Tenor Bell inscription is from the New Testament. The bells are notable for being the heaviest and highest ringing peal of bells in the world.

*(Photo by courtesy of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral)*



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designed to last for centuries. Whitechapel Bell Foundry's golden years were when it suspended bell manufacture during WW2, converting the factory into a munitions production line to making castings for the Ministry of War.

Following the sale of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, the bell patents were sold to the bell-hanging company Whites of Appleton in Oxfordshire, with whom the foundry had had a business relationship for 197 years, and the rights to tower bell production are now under the ownership of Westley Group Ltd. However following a last minute intervention by the UK Historic Buildings Preservation Trust, an alternative plan to at least save the site has been proposed with the aim of restarting foundry manufacturing. The Borough of Tower Hamlets has been ordered by the Government to review the current appalling planning application to turn the site into a 100 bed hotel. We eagerly await the latest and hopefully more positive news in this long long saga.

## WHAT'S ON?

### NEDIAS Lecture Programme

**M**eetings are held at: St Thomas' Centre, Chatsworth Road, Brampton (opposite Vauxhall/Bristol St Motors) S40 3AW. There's plenty of parking in their own car park, including disabled spaces, as well as on-road parking in front of the Church. All meetings commence at 7:30pm.

Monday, 9 March 2020	Brian Naylor: " <b>Heage Windmill</b> ". Preceded by our AGM.
Monday, 20 April 2020	Mike Ogden : " <b>Slow Road – Britain's canal heritage</b> "
Monday, 11 May 2020	<b>DAVID WILMOT MEMORIAL LECTURE</b> Martyn Taylor-Cockayne: " <b>Josias Jessop – the early railway pioneer</b> "
Monday, 14 September 2020	Cliff Lea: " <b>A virtual walk through Industrial Brampton</b> "
Monday, 11 October 2020	Ted Hancock: " <b>The Winter of 1947 on the Railways</b> ". Brrrr!

### Other Diary Dates

Monday, 24 February 2020 6:30pm	Prof. Julian Allwood: " <b>Forging People: How people and metal shape each other.</b> " Sheffield Section of Newcomen Society and IMechE meeting at Kelham Island Museum. Info - <a href="http://www.newcomen.com/activity/forging-identity-how-people-and-metal-shape-each-other">www.newcomen.com/activity/forging-identity-how-people-and-metal-shape-each-other</a>
Friday, 28 February 2020 7:30pm	Adrian Henstock: " <b>Crich pottery, 1690-1890</b> ". DAS Meeting at St Mary's Church Hall, Darley Lane, Derby. DE1 3 Info- <a href="http://www.derbyshireas.org.uk/Events">www.derbyshireas.org.uk/Events</a>
Wednesday, 1 April 2020 7:30pm	Darrell Clark: " <b>Willersley Castle</b> ". Talk at the Winding Wheel, tickets from Chesterfield Tourist Information Centre.
Friday, 3 April 2020 7:30pm	Chris Madge: " <b>The Derby-Sandiacre Canal – past and future</b> ". DAS Meeting at St Mary's Church Hall, Darley Lane, Derby. DE1 3 Info- <a href="http://www.derbyshireas.org.uk/Events">www.derbyshireas.org.uk/Events</a>
Saturday, 2 May 2020 9:00am	<b>EMIAC Conference: "18th and 19th Century Metal Mining in the Peak District"</b> . Peak District Mining Museum, Matlock Bath. Morning talks followed by afternoon visit to Magpie Mine.
Saturday, 23 May 2020 10:00am - 4:00pm	<b>Local History Fair</b> , venue PROACT Stadium. Organised by CADFHS. All our local heritage groups will have stands there.

# NEDIAS VISITS

## Bennerley Viaduct near Ilkeston, Friday 24 April 2020

The Friends of Bennerley Viaduct will lead us on an exclusive guided tour on the morning of Friday 24 April. We meet at 10:30 at the nearby car park at Newtons Lane/Shilo Way and will walk up to the viaduct from there, returning to the car park by about 12:30. We'll then visit the Erewash Museum in Ilkeston where we can have a snack lunch (or nearby pub). This local history museum has a gallery on industrial activity in the area.

Museum is free, and we'll collect nominal donations for Friends of Bennerley Viaduct on the day.

Sign up on the Visit Sheet at next meeting or book with Brian Dick, 01246 205720, [briandick34@hotmail.com](mailto:briandick34@hotmail.com)

## Portland Works, Monday 18 May 2020, 2:00pm on site.

We have managed to re-arrange our visit, talk and guided tour of the Portland Works for Monday 18 May 2020. Meet on site for start time 2:00pm. Address is Portland Works, Randall Street, Sheffield S2 4SJ, and it's at the junction of Hill Street and Randall Street. On-street parking on Hill Street (but watch out for the "residents only" bays).

Cost will be £5. Sign up on the Visit Sheet at next meeting or book with Brian Dick, 01246 205720, [briandick34@hotmail.com](mailto:briandick34@hotmail.com)

## Some Mills and Millers of Whittington

*by John Hodson*

*The author of this article John Hodson would be pleased to hear from anyone who has information or photographs of Whittington Mill. He is particularly interested in the time before 1840 and after 1911 but any information would be received with thanks. He can be contacted by e-mail at [johnh587@googlemail.com](mailto:johnh587@googlemail.com)*

### Introduction

In the late 1950s I briefly stayed at Brook House, the house associated with Whittington watermill, I was given a tour of the mill buildings. Recently I decided to investigate the history of the watermill. The mill I visited was one of at least three mills that had operated in the area, two others were the Whittington windmill and the watermill associated with the Sheepbridge Inn. Although this account mainly covers the mill at the bottom of Whittington Hill the windmill and mill associated with the Sheepbridge Inn are also briefly covered.

Census returns for 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911 have been used to identify millers at the time of the census. Trade directories, newspapers and published accounts have also been consulted.

### Whittington Windmill

Whittington windmill dates from before 1815, in his book<sup>1</sup> John Farey mentions Whittington windmill and states "by which a good deal of the flour of the district is ground". It is possible that the Cundeys were involved with the construction of the mill together with John Naylor a millwright of Whittington<sup>1</sup>. John and Isaac Cundey were millers since at least before 1815<sup>2</sup>. In 1815 the smock mill together with a small cottage and a piece of land were advertised for sale<sup>3</sup>. The mill was described as containing "one pair French stones, one pair grey stones, flour machine, corn screen and belting mill"<sup>3</sup>. A quantity of timber was also included in the sale. The mill, contents and timber were "late in the possession of Messers John and Isaac Cundey"<sup>3</sup>. The sale was held in the house of Mr George Glossop, the Cock and Magpie Inn at Whittington. As well as being an inn keeper George Glossop was a land agent. I don't know if the windmill and contents were sold or who bought them. In 1818 the partnership between the brothers John and Isaac Cundey was dissolved by mutual consent<sup>4</sup>. In 1820, only Isaac Cundey remained as miller at the windmill<sup>5</sup> and John Cundey had possibly moved to the Whittington watermill. It has been reported<sup>6</sup> that a commission of bankruptcy was issued against Isaac Cundey in 1820 but I have been unable to find this in *The London Gazette*, however, there are a

number of other insolvency notices in the Gazette naming Isaac and other members of the Cundey family. It is likely that Isaac Cundey senior remained at the windmill until his death in 1829<sup>7</sup>.

In September 1852 the Whittington windmill was advertised<sup>8</sup> to let as a corn mill powered by steam or wind and containing two stones and first rate machinery. Interested parties were advised<sup>8</sup> to apply to Samuel Ibbotson, on the premises, for particulars. I have not been able to find an Ibbotson as a miller but many Ibbotsons were farmers in the district.

In September 1870 the Whittington steam corn mill, together with the croft and dwelling house, were again advertised to let “after being put in a complete state of repair”<sup>9</sup>. No mention of wind power on this occasion and as repairs were necessary it is likely that the windmill was no longer functional. The mill was said<sup>9</sup> to have been in the occupation of Mr Ibbotson of Stonelow so perhaps Mr Ibbotson was the miller. For particulars interested parties were advised to apply to John Brown of Rose Hill, Chesterfield (Captain John Brown, originally from Scotland, was Land Agent for the Hunloke and De Rhodes Estates).

The mill was put up for sale in July 1895<sup>10</sup> and was described as the Old Windmill at Whittington with cottage and garden<sup>10</sup>. The description “Old Windmill” suggests that the windmill was no longer functional and perhaps power by steam was no longer financially viable. The windmill was demolished in around 1900.

### Sheepbridge Inn Watermill

The Askew family of the Sheepbridge Inn, Sheffield Road are recorded in the 1851 census. Michael Askew, the head of family, is shown as a miller, publican and farmer of 23 acres. The Sheepbridge Inn had a watermill associated with it. In March 1854 this mill was advertised<sup>11</sup> to be let and is described as having two powerful water wheels and a good supply of water. In 1860 Michael Askew and his wife Ann had a daughter Harriet who, in 1886, married Thomas Elliott who was to become the miller at Whittington Corn Mill.

Henry Thornton is recorded<sup>12</sup> as the inn keeper and corn miller at the Sheepbridge Inn watermill in 1857. In the 1861 census Michael Pocklington is identified as the inn keeper and there is no indication that milling was taking place. In 1867 the Sheepbridge Inn was advertised<sup>13</sup> for sale together with offices, stables, coach houses, outbuildings and gardens. No mention of a mill is made so it would seem that the Sheepbridge Inn watermill stopped working between 1857 and 1861.

### Whittington Water Mill

A map dated 1876<sup>14</sup> shows the watermill on the opposite side of the road to a gasworks and at the bottom of Whittington Hill, near the railway crossing. At that time the mill was powered by water from a mill pond situated alongside the railway line, the pond was supplied with water from the River Whitting. The River Whitting itself was fed with water from the River Don, Barlow Brook and one other small river. The effluent from the mill was returned to the river. The mill has been described as the Duke of Devonshire’s Mill<sup>15</sup>.

I have not been able to find a reliable date for the establishment of the original mill on this site. It is certainly very old and might have dated back to well before the 1500’s. In the 1960’s a broken millstone, inscribed 1679, could be seen at the mill<sup>16</sup>.

It is likely that the original mill became too small for the growing Whittington community. After demolition of the old mill a much larger one was constructed. The Devonshire Collection of papers<sup>17</sup>, now held by the

Derbyshire Archive Office, contains a very detailed account of the construction of the new mill on the site; the work is reliably dated as taking place between 1735 and 1736. The source and cost of materials such as stone, slate, timber, window glazing and nails etc. are given in detail as are the cost of services provided by carriers, masons, slaters, pavers, carpenters, millwrights and other craftsmen.

An item of particular interest is the carriage of black stone mill wheels from Hull to Bawtry and further carting to the mill site<sup>15</sup>. The preparation and laying of these stones is also described<sup>16</sup>. This



Whittington Corn Mill at the time it was reconstructed (left) and a recent photograph (right).

suggests that the black stones were imported through the port of Hull and it is likely that this fine grain blue/black larva stone came from a quarry near Cologne in Germany via the river Rhine. Stone from quarries in the Cologne area of Germany was exported to mills in most parts of Europe<sup>18</sup>, from Roman times. It is perhaps surprising that it was considered necessary to import stone from Germany when millstone grit, an excellent rock for producing millstones, was available only a few miles away in what is now the Peak District National Park. However, choice of millstone material depends on what is being milled. Millstone grit stones were usually used to grind grain like oats, barley and rye. For milling wheat the millstones from Cologne (Cullen stone) were often used but this dark Rhenish lava discoloured the flour. Later French Burr stones were increasingly imported from the Marne valley, France, as the quartz didn't discolour white flour<sup>18</sup>.

Ownership of the mill by His Grace the Duke Devonshire<sup>15</sup> seems to be confirmed by the fact that in January 1736 a bill for cleaning the mill dam bore his name, further confirmation is given by a receipt in The Devonshire Collection<sup>17</sup>, dated 1784, for a mill stone to be delivered to Isaac Cundey at Whittington Mill so perhaps Isaac Cundey senior was the miller at that time. I have not been able to establish when the Devonshire Estate sold the Whittington watermill, or who they sold it to. What remains of the mill buildings that stand today probably date from the 1735/1736 rebuild, however it is likely that some rebuilding and alteration has taken place since 1736.

The earliest positive reference I can find as to the identity of the miller at Whittington watermill is from the Pigot and Co's Directory of 1828<sup>19</sup> which identifies John Cundey as the corn miller, White's Directory of 1833<sup>20</sup> also identifies John Cundey as the corn miller. The same Pigot and Co's Directory shows William Cundey as a miller at Holymoorside and William Elliott as a miller at Walton. The Cundey family originally came from Old Brampton and had many business interests in North Derbyshire. Much later on, in 1895, members of the Cundey family, the Cundey brothers, were in business as saw millers at Ashover. In the 1911 census a branch of the Cundey family, employed as engineers and millwrights, is recorded at Alfreton.

The 1841 census return for Whittington shows John Cundey as miller living together with his wife Jane and their family. Sons Isaac aged 25 and John aged 15 are also described as millers.

The 1851 census shows that the Cundey family remained at Whittington Mill and John senior, Isaac and John junior are again identified as the millers.

In the 1861 census John Cundey, now aged 75, and his family are still at the Whittington corn mill. John senior and Isaac are shown as the millers but John junior is now recorded as a coal porter. John Cundey senior died at Whittington on the 7th July 1861. In the 1871 census John and Isaac Cundey are described as farmers. In the plain language of the day, Isaac is described as a cripple. In the 1881 census John is again described as a farmer and Isaac is described as a corn miller unable to work.

In March 1867<sup>21</sup> land, villa residence and water corn mill were advertised for sale by public auction. The villa residence was called the "Poplars" and had associated coach house, stable and suitable out buildings and was occupied by John Clark. The watermill was offered with associated machinery and a never failing supply of water, as formerly occupied by Messers Cundey<sup>21</sup>.

The Elliott family, who were to become associated with Whittington Mill for four generations and about 100 years, were millers at Clay Lane, Derbyshire before their move to Whittington.

The 1841 census for Clay Lane shows George Elliott together with his family. George is described as a miller. The same census shows George's son Thomas Elliott with his wife Hannah and sons John and George, Thomas is also described as a miller. In 1851, whilst still living in Clay Lane with his family, Thomas is described as a miller and farmer employing five servants.

In 1861 Thomas Elliott and his family are living at Cliff Cottage, Clay Lane. Thomas appears to have prospered as he is now described as a miller; farmer and colliery proprietor employing about 70 men and boys, his son William is described as a millwright. His son John and daughter-in-law Harriet have set up home on Mill Lane, Woodthorpe and have three children, John is described as a Master Miller.

In 1878 the Whittington mill and buildings were again advertised for sale<sup>22</sup>. The mill is described as a corn mill with fixtures, machinery, adjoining cottage and garden included in the sale. It was unoccupied at the time but the 1871 census shows the Elliotts, formerly of Clay Lane, as millers at Whittington and all living at various addresses on Whittington Hill. It is likely that the Elliotts operated Whittington Mill but did not occupy the mill buildings at that time. In the census the Elliott families are: Thomas Elliott (miller, first generation of the Elliott family to be associated with this mill) aged 53 and his wife Hannah and their youngest son William, Thomas's son John (miller) aged 33, his wife Harriet and their seven children and

Thomas's son Walter (miller) aged 17, his wife Ellen aged 19 and their daughter.

Thomas Elliott died on the 20th October 1876. The 1881 census shows John Elliott aged 43 (corn miller, second generation) his wife, their four sons and one daughter living at the mill. Their son Arthur aged 18 is also employed as a corn miller and son Thomas aged 22 is employed as an insurance agent. William Elliott and his wife Emma are living nearby on Holland Road; William is described as a millwright.

In 1886 the Elliott family brought a case against Chesterfield Rural Sanitary Authority claiming that the Sanitary Authority was in breach of an Act of Parliament safeguarding the supply of water from Barlow Brook to Whittington Mill<sup>23</sup>. The Elliott family were successful in that the judge made the following statement: "I should now express my decided opinion that there has been a breach of the obligations of the Act of Parliament. The injunction I must grant must be an injunction to prevent their taking any water from the Barlow Brook, unless there shall be a continuous flow of water down to Barlow Brook, below the point which the Company abstract water there from, of 150 cubic feet of water per minute of 24 hours of every day"<sup>23</sup>.

In 1891 the census records John Elliott (corn miller) and his wife Harriet, two daughters and son Henry, who is described as a miller's assistant, as living at the mill. Nearby at 91, Station road John's son Thomas (corn miller, third generation) is living with his wife, also called Harriet, their son, daughter and his sister. John's son Arthur is now employed as a foreman flour miller living with his wife and daughters at Nether Hallam, Sheffield.

In 1901 John Elliott and his wife have moved out of the mill and are living on Whittington Hill, he is described as a farmer. In 1911 John and his wife moved back to the mill and are living at Brook House, he is described as a retired miller. In 1901 Thomas Elliott and his family are now living at the mill; Thomas is described as corn miller and corn merchant. In 1911 Thomas, his wife, two sons and two daughters are still living at the mill. Their eldest son Michael Eric, aged 22, is of the fourth generation and one of the last members of the Elliott family to be associated with the mill.

In 1915 the mill finally came into the ownership of the Elliott family. *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph*<sup>24</sup> reported that Messrs W D Botham had sold an old established corn mill, known as Whittington Mill, with internal fittings, Brook House, two seven roomed cottages, croft and a plot of building land, for £1,220, to Mr T Elliott, Whittington.

The introduction of roller milling in the 1870s combined with steam engine power made life very difficult for the small scale water or wind miller. In 1887 8,814 flour mills had been identified in the United Kingdom. Of these only 461 were roller mills, but these accounted for 65% of the country's flour production<sup>25</sup>. Despite the closure of Whittington windmill and the Sheepbridge Inn watermill, it is very unlikely that Thomas Elliott had sufficient work for the mill to continue as a profitable business. Sometime after 1890 Thomas Elliott ventured into the timber business, in 1895<sup>26</sup> he is recorded as a timber merchant at Whittington mill. Over 40 years he is regularly recorded as a timber merchant in Whittington trade directory entries but I have not seen him identified as a miller in these directories. Thomas Elliott died in 1932<sup>27</sup>.

I have not been able to establish when Whittington watermill stopped working. In the 1911 census both Thomas Elliott and his son Michael Eric are identified as millers. It has been stated<sup>15</sup> that the mill continued to be used up to the early 1920s. Confusingly Michael Elliott is identified as a miller and farmer in the 1939 Register for England and Wales<sup>28</sup>, it is unlikely that he was a miller in 1939, the word miller is probably a continuation of an earlier job description. My estimate is that milling for flour production stopped around 1900 and milling of other materials on a large scale, such as animal feed, stopped in the 1920s. More recently and for many years, the mill building was used as a joiner's workshop; perhaps this was a continuation of Thomas Elliott's business as a timber merchant.

In the late 1950s R H Oakley was shown over the mill by a member of the Elliott family, probably Harold Elliott. Mr Oakley describes<sup>16</sup> the mill as surviving with every item of machinery and miller's tools intact. He goes on to write that the building was constructed using gritstone and had four floors and five pairs of stones which were, unusually, driven from a long horizontal shaft rather than being driven via vertical shafts. Only one waterwheel was present at the time of his visit but at least two waterwheels would have originally been installed in order to drive five pairs of stones.

The mill buildings and Brook House still stand. Following the deaths of Mr and Mrs Woodhead in the 1970s the mill and house were sold. Mrs Woodhead, née Elliott, is the daughter of Thomas Elliott (corn miller, third generation).

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# Arthur Richardson MBE (1882-1965) – one of Barrow Hill's most famous sons

*by Cliff Lea*

*Arthur Richardson was born in 1882 in Barrow Hill, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, he was the son of a locomotive driver, and died 1965 in Crediton, Devon. Little is known locally about him in Chesterfield and Barrow Hill where he was born, but it turns out that he became one of the very finest violin makers of the 20th century. His violins and violas are of such quality that now 50 years after his death, they sell around the world at auction for 5-figure sums.*

**A**rthur's father was Thomas Richardson, born Staveley 1855. Thomas initially worked at Staveley Iron Co., and by 1876 he was employed with the Midland Railway. He married Ellen Smith of Staveley in 1880.

The 1881 census records show Thomas, now as Locomotive Fireman, to be living at 2 Railway Cottages (Allport Terrace), Barrow Hill, Staveley. Allport Terrace was amongst the earliest of the Midland Railway houses at Barrow Hill railway sheds and roundhouse.

It was here that son Arthur was born in November 1882, and the family was shortly to move to Nottingham, and then to Mansfield.

RIGHT: Railway Cottages/Allport Terrace, Barrow Hill, where Arthur Richardson was born. These were amongst the earliest railway cottages in Barrow Hill – his father was a railway employee.



The Midland Railway Loco Dept. District Staff Book lists Arthur's father Thomas on the Nottingham Loco Department Register as employed at Mansfield from 11th August 1887, and confirms that he previously worked at Staveley (Barrow Hill). Thomas joined the railway union in Mansfield in 1887, now promoted to Engine Driver, and the 1891 the census records show that the family had moved to 39 Annesley Street, Nottingham, and shortly to Mansfield.



Brunts Technical School, Mansfield.  
From a postcard, c1917

Young Arthur was later to gain scholarship to Brunts Technical School (later renamed Brunts Grammar School) Mansfield, a school which now has strong music traditions.

Brunts can trace its history back to an elementary school that was founded in the 1600s. In 1709 Samuel Brunts left a bequest and the school became the richest of all charitable foundations in Mansfield by 1832, when it was paying out £4 a year to 220 different claimants.

It was during his early life at home that Arthur developed serious interest in violins and music – in his later years in an interview recorded by author Eric Delderfield<sup>1</sup> after he'd become well known, Arthur said that as a youngster *"his village had a band made up largely of two branches of his own family. One close companion played a violin that had been made by his grandfather"*. It was on his grandfather's violin that he first learned to play, and it's no surprise therefore that this early interest in stringed instruments continued.

His daughter later wrote in an article she penned for the Viola Research Society<sup>2</sup> that Arthur's grandfather was *"a lively amateur musician who conducted the village band and made instruments ... including a violin or two"*.

By the 1901 census when Arthur was 18, he was living with the family at 14 Bishop Street, Mansfield, and apprenticed as a Patternmaker at a local foundry, probably the Meadow Foundry of Mansfield. Around 1900 the Meadow Foundry was producing a wide variety of cast iron products including lamp columns, cast iron windows, manhole covers, rain water gutters and downpipes and later was well-known for its red cast iron GPO post boxes

During his apprenticeship at age 14 Arthur developed a wider interest in fine woodcarving, and he elected to study woodcarving in the evenings at Mansfield School of Art. At the conclusion of his apprenticeship he had clearly become very skilled and moved on to continue his training at South Kensington School of Art. Certainly, by the time of the 1911 census whilst his parents were still living at 14 Bishop Street, their son Arthur had by then moved away.

The 1911 census records in Northamptonshire show Arthur to be working as a woodcarver in Brigstock, Northamptonshire, and in 1912, he wed Beatrice May Vinnell in the Lichfield area - and they were subsequently to have 3 children. After marriage he moved to Leeds (where his first daughter Marjorie Ellen R was born in 1813). In the Delderfield interview Arthur mentioned studying at Leeds Reference Library and this may be where he researched makers and styles of violins. He was known to have studied the designs of fiddles made by Stradivarius and Guarnerius, the very famous makers.

By 1914 Arthur moved to work for a company called Dart & Francis Ltd. in Crediton, Devon. Dart & Francis were then making fine quality bespoke carved timber ecclesiastical and "Arts and Crafts" items for churches, stately homes and wealthy patrons. Clearly his skills with wood were much appreciated.

He was now making and lovingly crafting violins in his spare time, and his big break-through came when a friend suggested he enter what was said to be only the second violin which he had made, in a competition being held to find the best British-made violin and best new musical composition for string ensembles. This was the Cobbett Competition – Arthur became winner in 1919<sup>3</sup>.

The competition had been devised a few years earlier by Walter Cobbett. Cobbett had made his fortune from manufacture of drive belts, but was an industrialist with deep musical interest and was a keen amateur violinist and conductor of an amateur orchestra. He announced and funded a prize for British made instruments and for British composers – *the Cobbett "Phantasy" Competition*. Both Benjamin Britten and Ralph Vaughan Williams have in their time been winners of Cobbett prizes for their musical compositions. Concerts were give in London's Aeolian Hall, and the audience then voted for "best instrument" played during the concert.

In January 1919 a fiddle that Richardson made was played by a member of the *"London String Quartette"*, and it won in the competition that year. Since a requirement was for the instrument to be sold, this was his very first sale. The player who had used Richardson's instrument much prized it for its tone and he praised it

highly. One of his later instruments again won first prize in the competition for quartets in 1923.

It's no wonder that Richardson's reputation as a "luthier" was now assured and his violins became much in demand! Other sales followed and it's at this time with his competition winnings and earnings that he now set up in business in Crediton.

One of the other significant events in his working life occurred a decade or so later. In 1926 at a concert in Bideford, Richardson met one of the world's most well known viola players of the time - Lionel Tertis. Tertis explained to him some of the physical difficulties in playing the larger viola common at that time. After Tertis had retired from professional playing in 1937 he sought out Richardson, and the two collaborated extensively on a project to develop a slightly smaller, and more comfortable size of viola to play<sup>4</sup>.

There was considerable development, with Tertis visiting Richardson in his workshop many times until they perfected the new "R.T" (R and T standing for Richardson and Tertis) model. These Tertis models were a little shorter and are said to possess very fine tone. They owed much to the expertise of Richardson, and they became much sought after. It was a decade later in 1949 that Richardson entered one of his finest violas into international competition for stringed instruments at The Hague - it was awarded Diploma of Honour.

From the workshop at his home in Crediton, Richardson went on to make over 200 violas (mostly of the Tertis design), over 300 violins and 28 cellos, and his instruments are still in use around the world – they are still much sought after. In 1961 he was awarded an MBE for services to music, and continued making until age 81. Whilst he died in 1965, his violins occasionally come up for sale in auction houses worldwide and they now achieve 5 figure sums. Far in excess of what Richardson himself charged when supplied new – many were commissions and made to order for some of the finest musicians of the day who would visit him in his Crediton workshop.

### Another Derbyshire Connection

To produce an instrument of superb tone, quite different to that of a factory made fiddle, and more similar to the rich sounds from one of the famous historical craftsmen, Richardson selected his woods carefully.

Advert in "The Strad" magazine, 1927



Arthur Richardson (left) together with the famous viola player Lionel Tertis. Picture Post, Sep 6, 1947.

Equally, they needed protection and a very important part of achieving the finest instrument rests with the type of varnish coatings used. Richardson worked with a chemist from the Derby area called Millington<sup>5</sup> and as he developed his business he became an agent for Millington's violin varnishes too.

It's interesting that Arthur Richardson, despite his later fame, continued to sell his violins and violas at reasonable prices, despite their being able to command much greater sums. His workshop where he produced these instruments of such exceptional tone and timbre was surprisingly simple – it was a shed in his garden. When applying the many coats of varnish to "work in progress" they would be hung out to dry on a washing line.

He was a much respected man in musical circles, and a friend of many famous violinists whom he welcomed to his home to discuss their needs and to craft the right instrument for them. Equally he was a much respected "local" who apparently became a leading light in the Crediton Bowling Club.

This unassuming man, the son of a locomotive driver, now has a Blue Plaque dedicated to him in his home town of Crediton, and perhaps there should also be Blue Plaques in Barrow Hill/ Chesterfield and Mansfield, the towns where he was born and brought up and where so little is known of his really successful later life.



LEFT: Arthur Richardson – hanging out varnished violins to dry in his garden next to his workshop shed. (Photo by courtesy of John Heal and Crediton History Society).

RIGHT: Richardson, a keen player at Crediton Bowling Club (5th from left)

*My thanks go to many contributors including staff at Chesterfield Library, John Heal of Crediton History Society, who has provided photographs and reference articles, Ron Presswood, Ann Lucas of Barrow Hill Heritage Group, Dave Harris of Midland Railway Study Centre, Allan Barham and Hugh Slaney of Old Mansfield Society and particularly Sam Copnell who has provided me with much background, including a copy of the booklet which Richardson supplied with each violin sold.*

1. **“A Crediton Craftsman”** from the book **“Just Wandering in Devon”** by Eric R. Delderfield. 1954, Raleigh Press.
2. **“Arthur Richardson – 1882-1965”** by his daughter Marjorie Baker. Viola Research Society Newsletter, No. 14, May 1981
3. **“Cobbett’s Phantasy: A Legacy of Chamber Music in the British Musical Renaissance”** by Betsi Hodges, University of North Carolina, 2008
4. **“Lionel Tertis and his Viola”**, Picture Post, Sept 6. 1947, p26-27
5. **“Arthur Richardson”** by Dennis Plowright. *The Strad*, Vol.92, No.1096, p271 (1981)

## IA News and Notes

### More on the lost railways of Stanton Moor

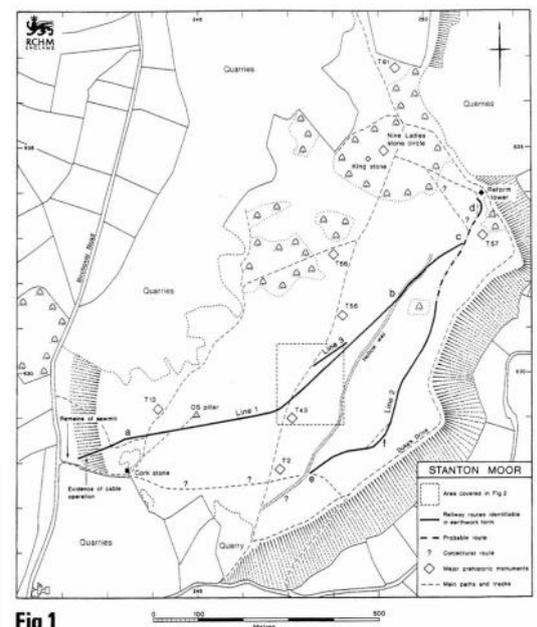
Following the last Newsletter, and Martyn Taylor-Cockayne’s mention of the railway on Stanton Moor, Derrick Bayliss has mailed me a copy of a paper by Stewart Ainsworth (*“The Light Railway on Stanton Moor”*, Industrial Railway Review, No. 122, Sept 1990). Derrick comments:

*“When Stewart Ainsworth was researching this paper, he contacted me and we spent an interesting couple of hours exploring the remains. Historic England must have a report on it but Stewart also wrote this article for Industrial Railway Review”*.

This 6-page article first of all covers the background: the high demand for timber during WW1 for trench supports, and the subsequent stationing of a Canadian Army unit, the Canadian Forestry Corps, at Rowsley just a mile from Stanton Moor. The animal hauled railway built across Stanton Moor therefore was able to feed into the Great Central Railway operation, but was just one of the many forestry operations with which this unit became involved.

Please let me know if you’re interested to view this report. In the meantime will arrange a date to visit Stanton Moor to see if we can

The map is of Stanton Moor with Ainsworth’s rail lines shown. “Line 1” stretched from the Reform Tower in the north-east down and across to the Cork Stone near the Birchover Road in the south-west. Lines 2 and 3 also shown. (From RCHM and HE report and contained in *“The Light Railway on Stanton Moor”*, Industrial Railway Review, No. 122, Sept 1990).



find the traces of these rail lines during the Spring.

This operation carried out by a Canadian Army unit reminds me of the massive forested areas around Vancouver near where my daughter lives. In recent years I've wandered through the forests there, where the trees were stripped between the 1800s to 1960. Thousands of square miles. Enormous 500 year old conifers chopped like matchsticks and removed to fire North America's insatiable energy demand by a very efficient industry. It's interesting to see how it was done, where tramlines and "skid rows" marched across the landscape. And here we have the Canadian's doing similar things here over much smaller area just 100 years ago, but using their great forestry expertise.

## Kirkby-in-Ashfield Loco Sheds

An interesting project is going to be run during 2020, looking at the history and legacy of Kirkby-in-Ashfield loco sheds which ran from 1903 until the late 1960s.

The site opened in 1903 by the Midland Railway Company. It was built as a 'Garage Shed' to serve the local collieries in the then rapidly expanding East Midlands & South Yorkshire coalfields. In 1923 it came within the ownership of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway, and at nationalisation in 1948 it came under the British Railways (London Midland Region). During WW2 oil firing equipment was installed to replace coal because of expected shortages but it never came into use. A concrete Coaling Tower and an Ash Plant were installed in 1957 as part of a modernisation plan. Follow what's going on, check on the Kirkby Heritage Centre page - <https://en-gb.facebook.com/groups/439204109487919/about/>

## Chairman's Chat

*Cliff Lea*

Our AGM is coming up at the March Meeting, and afterwards Brian Naylor will talk about Heage Windmill, the only fully operational 6-sailed tower windmill in the country. So, unique, and so close to us. Originally built in 1797, it was restored in 2002. The AGM is an important time for us, when the Committee can report Accounts (now up on our website) and other matters to you. Equally it's your turn to tell us what you would like NEDIAS to do or cover over the next year or so - the Committee members would love to hear ideas from you. Equally, I'm sure they won't mind my saying, they are a dedicated group, which has remained stable for so many years, ensuring the really smooth running of NEDIAS. Maybe you'd like to volunteer yourself? New blood does help us to look in new directions - see the AGM Notice and Nomination form attached.

We're all faced with difficult decisions from time to time, but have you heard of the difficult decision which the Science Museum Group and NRM are currently talking about up in Darlington? There is a proposal to relocate Stephenson's famous "Locomotive No.1" from Darlington Station to a newly revamped Shildon Museum. Locomotive No.1 has been at Darlington Station for more years than I care to remember, and I think the good citizens of Darlington rightly regard it as their own, and indeed, it's depicted on the town's coat of arms.

However, I can see the point of the Science Museum Group - who have owned the Locomotive for 50 years, that they want to make it the central attraction for the £4.5 million revamped Shildon "Locomotion" Museum. This is a critical time - the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway comes up very shortly in 2025. So which side do you back? Leader of Darlington Council said: "... *the people of Darlington are horrified. I want to send a very clear message this council will leave no stone unturned in our quest to keep Locomotion No.1 in Darlington.*" It's been pointed out that Edward Pease paid to have the loco restored after it had come to the end of its working life, and wanted it to be displayed in Darlington. So, where should this be exhibited? Me? I'm with the Museum, where it will be seen by many more people.

I'm glad these are decisions which don't come up for our own AGM!

RIGHT: Locomotion No 1 on display at **Head of Steam**, formerly known as the Darlington Railway Centre and Museum



## And finally ....

### .... have you heard of the great news at Bennerley Viaduct?

**T**he Bennerley Viaduct spans the Cossall Moss of the Erewash Valley linking Cotmanhay in Nottinghamshire with Ilkeston in Derbyshire. It is a massive 1452 ft. long, has 16 latticework deck spans each of 76ft supported on substantial wrought iron columns, linked by cotter pins and half a million rivets. It was built by GNR and completed in 1877, built for the railway line between Awesworth Junction and Derby on the Derbyshire and Staffordshire Line and opened in January 1878.

It incredibly survived bombing of the nearby Stanton Ironworks in 1916 by Zeppelins, and for a long time has faced an uncertain future – the last passenger train crossed in 1964, the last goods train in 1968.



View of Bennerley Viaduct (Photo by courtesy of the Friends of Bennerley Viaduct)

However the Friends of Bennerley Viaduct (see: [friendsofbennerleyviaduct.wordpress.com](http://friendsofbennerleyviaduct.wordpress.com)) have worked tirelessly for some years. The structure is now Grade 11\* listed, is on HE's Buildings at Risk Register and amazingly is the only British monument listed in the World Monuments Funds Watch List for this year, 2020. The World Monuments Fund is a private non-profit organization founded in 1965 by individuals concerned about the accelerating destruction of important structures and monuments throughout the world. The WMF are dedicated to "saving the World's most treasured places".

**And Finally** - Things are happening and after 50 years, the structure is to be stabilised and restored for foot traffic over the coming year. Time for a visit ? Join us there on Friday 24 April, see page 3

**Contributions, no matter how short (maybe about a visit you have made), and preferably by email to [cliff@nedias.co.uk](mailto:cliff@nedias.co.uk), for inclusion in future editions of this newsletter are most welcome.**

**COPY DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT EDITION: 2 April 2020**

### **NEDIAS Committee:**

**Chairman and publications** – Cliff Lea; **Vice-Chairman** – Derek Grindell; **Secretary** – Patricia Pick; **Treasurer** – Pamela Alton; **Membership Secretary** – Jean Heathcote; **Lecture Meetings and Visits Co-ordinator** – Brian Dick; **Committee Members** – Diana Allen, David Hart, David Palmer.

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