

North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society



NEDIAS Newsletter No. 66 – May 2017

Price: £2.00 (Free to Members)



The Elusive Hopton-Wood Stone – Part One

Derek Grindell



On Wednesday 10th February 2016, page 17 of *The Times* featured an illustrated report on a six-bedroom, six floor property located in London's Belgravia that had come on the market and was already attracting potential buyers. The town house had been the home of Margaret Thatcher from her leaving office in 1991 until her death in 2013. The developers, 'Leconfield', appointed Savills to manage the sale and there was every expectation that the asking price of £30m would be reached.

The stucco-fronted house has a lift, a mews annexe, a bar with a wine cellar and a hall floor covered in Hopton-Wood stone. The latter feature was clearly considered a selling point worthy of special mention and the name immediately indicated a link with North Derbyshire, although it is unlikely that today's prospective buyers are aware of its unique attributes and the story of its all too brief commercial exploitation.

Fortunately, the story of this now rare stone was told, in terms comprehensible to the average layman, in a book published in 1947 by The Hopton-Wood Stone Firms Ltd. Entitled *Hopton-Wood Stone a Book for the Architect and Craftsman*, its opening chapter details the unique geological origins of this remarkable material. Long before man's ancestors appeared, the major part of the British Isles was under water and the area now known as Derbyshire was no more than a bed of mud with a high lime content. Such conditions provided a habitat for a particular type of marine organism and, specifically, certain varieties possessing hard internal structures composed of calcium carbonate. Such organisms included corals, crinoids (sea lilies), brachiopods (twin shelled molluscs), and foraminifera (minute organisms with a shell divided into chambers). Their skeletons accumulated on the sea bed and were buried by a combination of both successive deposits of skeletal remains and amounts of calcium carbonate precipitated from sea water. Incremental high pressure over millennia from an ongoing accretion of higher sediments and from earth movements that sunk valleys and elevated mountain peaks, compacting them in their partly re-crystallised calcite matrix to create layers of limestone. Geologists recognise this era as the Carboniferous period since, at its demise, the primeval forests were buried and crushed, creating coal measures. The 'Mountain Limestone' of this era is known scientifically as 'Carboniferous' and hence Hopton-Wood Stone is an exceptionally fine and unique variety of Lower Carboniferous Limestone, found only in the Middleton by Wirksworth area.

In a district famous for remarkably pure limestones, Hopton-Wood stands out as exceptional. Whilst the calcium-carbonate content of other stones is very high, frequently exceeding 94% of the rock mass, the average calcium-carbonate content of Hopton-Wood is more than 99%, whilst its iron content stands at the extraordinarily low figure of 0.02%. This degree of purity, arising from an absence of foreign sediments of



<https://www.facebook.com/nediaschesterfield/?fref=ts>

In this issue: ■ The Elusive Hopton-Wood Stone ■ What's On? ■ NEDIAS Visits ■ Piccadilly Road's Involvement in Social Housing ■ I A News & Notes ■ Chairman's Chat ■ And Finally ... *Pearsons Pottery* ■

grit, sand and mud, signifies that no streams were draining into that part of the sea-bed during the countless centuries when the Hopton-Wood Measures were being deposited. Tranquil and relatively constant settling led to very slight variations in chemical purity from bed to bed, which are of an unusual thickness. A bedding plane usually indicates a pause or changed conditions in the deposition; the thick beds of the Hopton-Wood Measures prove that interruptions were less frequent here than in the formation of most other mountain limestones.

For some reason yet to be explained, Hopton-Wood is less erratically jointed than adjacent limestones. Such joints are caused by shrinkage of the mass in drying-out and in compacting, or by folding and faulting of the strata: in Hopton-Wood the effect of these actions seems to have been reduced to the minimum, and large blocks of the stone could readily be quarried. Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, it was extracted from a site located immediately south of the Via Gellia some 1.5 kilometres due west of the Rise End area of Middleton by Wirksworth. This western outcrop was exploited by the Hopton Wood Stone Co. whilst an eastern outcrop in the village of Middleton by Wirksworth on the west side of the B5023 was worked by Killer Bros. from around 1870. The two firms amalgamated in 1905 and, unusually for mergers as we know them today, the number of local employees in the quarries increased from 61 in 1871 to 234 over the ensuing three decades.

Following the cessation of hostilities in WW1 the Hopton Wood Stone Co. was contracted by the Imperial War Graves Commission to supply headstones for despatch to Belgium and France. Local stone masons could not cope with the sheer volume of skilled work required and stone masons from well beyond the county's borders were recruited to cut, dress, polish and engrave the headstones. From the early 1920s in excess of 120,000 headstones were completed and shipped to the war cemeteries in France and Belgium.

Visitors to Middleton Quarry observe across the face a band of fine-grained impervious clay, which is the decomposed remains of lava that flowed from some submarine volcanic eruption, scaling off the sediment below. This feature, known locally as the 'Great Clay', was the last of Hopton-Wood's primeval blessings, for it has formed a sill, preventing the percolation into the lower measures of water which would not only have enlarged the joints but filled them with quantities of clay-like material whose iron constituents would inevitably have ruined the delicate even colouring, which is one of the great charms of Hopton-Wood Stone.

Once the overflow of lava ceased, the deposition of limestone resumed, albeit not with its original uniformity. Above the 'Great Clay' lies the ordinary mountain limestone of Derbyshire, which makes top grade road-surfacing and furnace-flux, but it has not the solid, uniform texture which renders the Hopton-Wood Measures so attractive to both architect and sculptor. Hopton-Wood Stone is 'Dark' or 'Light', dependent upon it originating from the top or the bottom of the quarry face. At the time of publication the geologists could not be certain of the cause but one explanation could be that the beds immediately underlying the band of igneous clay had been discoloured by volcanic ash falling into the sea prior to an eruption of lava. Pending the resolution of this 'geological teaser' the availability of these contrasting tones proved an attractive option to interior designers and led to their extensive use on the floors of Chatsworth House and the Houses of Parliament where it was laid with a native black stone, no longer available, to create the first chequer board floor in England. In Sheffield's City Hall engraved Venetian Glass mirrors are let in to Hopton-Wood stone and within the auditorium two ferocious lions, beautifully carved by John Hodge, stand on plinths facing the audience, commanding their attention. Hopton-Wood's versatility as a

rewarding medium for sculptors is also well illustrated by two panels on the facade of Wirksworth's Moot Hall (Figs. 1&2). After almost 200 years the panels bearing the symbols appertaining to the ancient office of 'Barmaster' remain as fresh and sharply defined as the day of their installation despite the hardly benign climate of rural Derbyshire. In stark contrast the wall on which they are attached shows

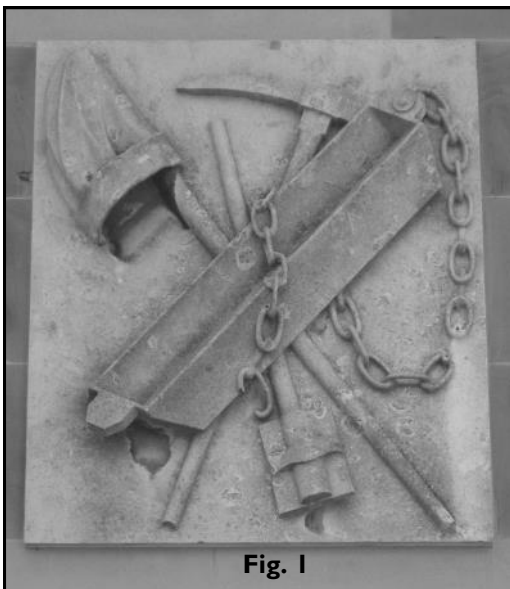


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

signs of scaling. Eric Gill also used Hopton Wood for his carving of ‘The Sower’ on the BBC’s Broadcasting House. The Bank of England, Derby’s Police Court and Liverpool Cathedral also have fine examples of Hopton-Wood Stone’s suitability for prestigious architecture.

Hopton Wood limestone, light beige/white in colour, is transformed by polishing, which highlights its unique and extremely attractive features. Limestone slab sizes are typically 1.4m x 1.0m but can vary and precise matching could not be guaranteed. In the post war years it was much favoured by architects and builders for its unsurpassed finish and its availability in lengths of up to 3 metres and in thicknesses varying from 1 metre to 2 cm. In situ, Hopton-Wood lies in beds in a thickness ranging from 1 metre to 4 metres and is joined naturally, not solely by horizontal ‘partings’ that separate the layers, but also vertically. The process of detaching a block from surroundings from which it has been an intrinsic part for 500 million years is known as ‘winning’ and was only instigated after the newly fractured surfaces were forensically examined for signs of flaws. Once it has passed this inspection it was passed to the ‘scappler’, who squared up the stone for sawing. If it was decided to split it, a line of shallow holes was drilled across the block and these were carefully pegged until the two halves part.

In 1959, for reasons of safety and logistics, a further extension of Middleton Quarry at depth could not be undertaken and in 1959 it was decided that Middleton Mine would be developed for the production of ultra-high purity industrial stone. For the next 47 years, until closure in 2006, the site produced 4-500,000 tons p.a.

It is worth noting that from the initial Hopton Wood operations in the 18thC, right through to the closure of Middleton Mine, the main product in terms of volume from the operations surrounding Middleton Moor was always high purity industrial limestone, particularly as a metallurgical flux, and not Hopton-Wood despite its demand as building or decorative stone.

In 1979, sufficient blocks of Hopton Wood were located to provide new flooring for Birmingham Cathedral, by the then operating company, Tarmac plc, which had also acquired parallel interests in decorative stone finishing capacity. These included Frank England Ltd of Retford, who later became sole agents for the stone. This order stimulated a feasibility study in 1981 of possible unexploited sources of Hopton Wood and led investigators to the company’s extensive Middle Peak Quarry. The main operation here, largely in Monsal Dale Beds, had concentrated on producing fluxing stone for over 150 years, turning to aggregates in the 1960s. At this point, working depths had extended far enough to encounter the underlying Bee Low Limestones, including the Hopton-Wood Stone (also extracted much earlier at the nearby Middle Peak (roadside) Quarry. The Hopton Wood production team faced considerable difficulties in locating material sufficiently distanced from the effects of modern blasting, but getting was in hand until at least 1986, mainly in order to supply a contract for the new Glasgow Sherriff’s Court. Further commissions were received for 3,500 sq. metres of dark and light Hopton Wood in respect of an unspecified prestigious Westminster office development but by the late 1980s the stone was again no longer being won.

In 1990, Tarmac plc, which in 1989 had sold off most of its building stone interests, including Frank England, again changed policy, establishing a new state of the art stone saw mill at Cawdor Quarry, Matlock and resumed the search for new sources of Hopton Wood Stone, but this time, to no avail. In 1992 however, a well-established local specialist masonry concern, Francis N. Lowe Ltd. teamed up with the independent company Hopton-Wood Stone.

Look out for Part Two in the next issue

WHAT’S ON?

NEDIAS Lecture Programme

Meetings 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, 11th September 2017	Pete Lawton: “The English Longbow”
Monday, 9th October 2107	Tony Ball: “The Moriston Hydro Project”
Monday, 13^h November 2017	Peter Hawkins: “The Yorkshire Engine Company of Sheffield”

Other Diary Dates

Thursday, 11 th May 2017	“Lea Hurst, the Nightingale home” . Lecture by Adam White at Cromford Mill. 7:00pm for 7:30pm. Booking at ☎ 01629 823256.
Thursday, 11 th May to Saturday, 13 th May 2017	“International Early Engines Conference” at Elsecar. Info from meetings.syorks@newcomen.com . A Newcomen Society event.
Monday, 15 th May 2017	“Dead Dogs and Foul Odours – the cleansing of the River Porter in 1880s” . Talk by Derek Bayliss. SYIHS, Kelham Island Museum, 7:30pm. Info: Derek Bayliss ☎ 0114 210 7693
Tuesday, 16 th May 2017	British Transport Films . Nick Wheat. Chesterfield & District Local History Society. Rose Hill United Reformed Church, S40 1JN. 7:30pm
Saturday, 22 nd July and Sunday, 23 rd July 2017	Barrow Hill Archaeology Weekend . Info at www.barrowhill.org/events.html or ☎ 01246 472450.

NEDIAS Visits

Monday, 12th June at 7:00pm. Barrow Hill Heritage Trail.

Sandra Struggles will lead us around Barrow Hill Heritage Trail, the area made famous by Richard Barrow, but where George Sitwell's forges and iron furnaces had existed from the 1650s. En-route we'll be able to see inside the “Arts and Crafts” style Parish Church with its William Morris window. No charge.

We meet at the Memorial Hall, 3 Station Rd, S43 2PG for a 7pm amble which will take about an hour, followed by tea/coffee and questions back at the Memorial Hall.

Thursday, 22nd June at 1:00pm. Sheffield Assay Office.

There has been an Assay Office in Sheffield since 1773 when it was created by Act of Parliament. Our talk and tour is conducted by their Curator:

1:00pm: Arrival/Coffee & Biscuits

1:15pm: Illustrated talk of the history and scope of the Assay Office by Curator. Tour of operations, assay process, library, archives and collection.

3:30pm: Departure

Cost: £12.50 pp **payable in advance**.

Please add your names to the list at our meetings or advise Brian Dick, briandick34@hotmail.com or ☎ 01246 205720

PICCADILLY ROAD'S INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL HOUSING

Philip Cousins

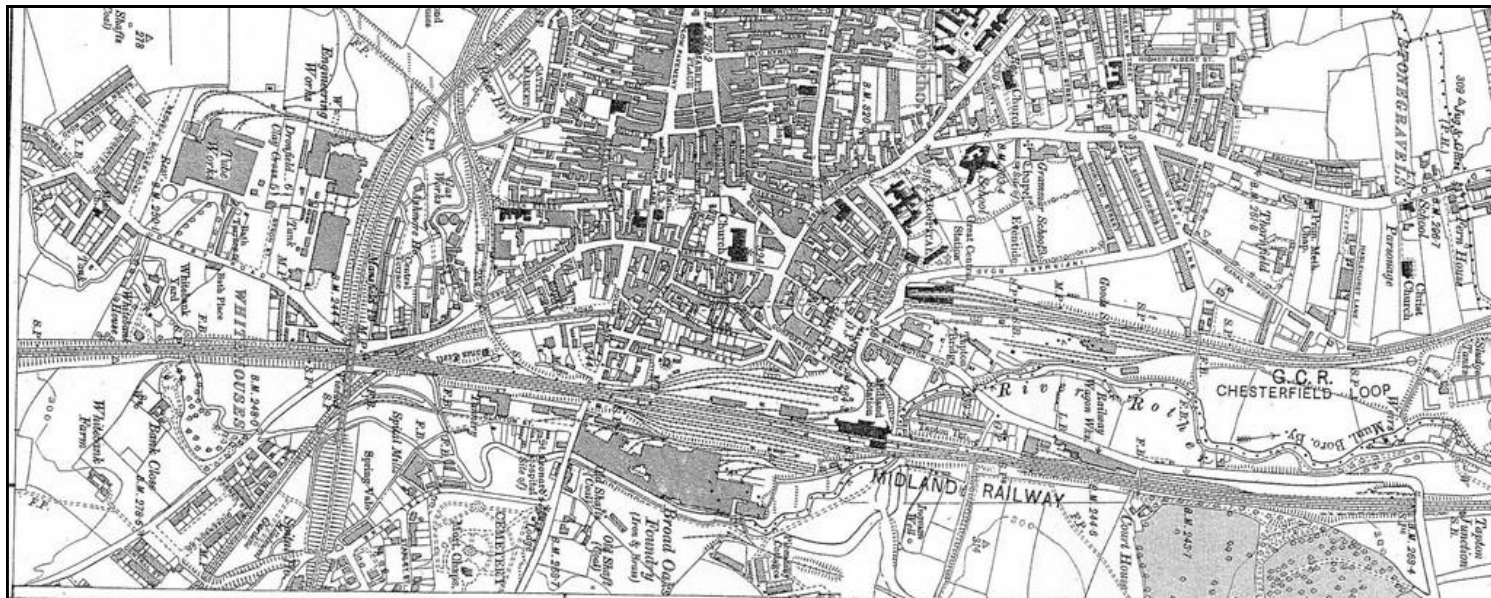
Introduction

This article explains how the small terraced, single storey cottages on Piccadilly Road, at the Hady Hill end, had their origins. Were these cottages a small development for Markham works or designed as some form of early 20th century alms houses? The answer is neither of these. But, as this article will seek to explore, they played a small part in early 20th century social housing in the Chesterfield area.

Additionally described is an outline of social/industrial housing locally and nationally in the period leading up to and after the Great War. The role of a sadly neglected body – the Industrial Housing Association, who provided another set of what today would be described as social housing on Piccadilly Road – is briefly explored.

The bedsitter cottages

Piccadilly Road runs south to north connecting Hady Lane to Crow Lane at its northern outlet. The six cottages that are the subject of this article are on the west side of Piccadilly Road, at its southern end. They appear primarily to have been the idea of local builder and town statesmen William Rhodes and Charles Paxton Markham, under the auspices of the 'Chesterfield Development Company'. Fortunately the *Derbyshire Courier* of 21 February 1914 (then one of two Chesterfield based newspapers) records the submission and approval of plans to build the properties by Chesterfield Town Council. It also contains elevations and plans, reproduced in this article. Originally four cottages were planned, though six were built – all these survive today and are illustrated in this article.



This extract is enlarged from the 1921 edition, 6-inch to one mile Ordnance Survey map, re-orientated with the north to the right. The map was revised in 1914 and re-levelled in 1915. The six bed-sitter cottages can just be seen, somewhat isolated, near the legends 'Old Shafts (Coal)' to the left (south) of the map. Wharton's foundry, mentioned in the article, is the building facing the bottom of Hady Hill, across the river Rother from the Broad Oaks Foundry (Markham's works). That river follows a fairly straight course from the south until just before a third of the way along the map extract. From there the dotted lines, (which show the boundary of the borough up to enlargement in 1920) follow the course of the old river bed, partially built on by the Broad Oaks Foundry (Markham Works). A new river bed awaits the eventual further diversion of the river, complete with a bridge to take the new course of Crow Lane over it. The old Crow Lane, shown from half-way along the bottom of the map, follows a straighter route to Tapton Terrace than today. Note 'Piccadilly Cottages'; one range of which still survives on Piccadilly Road. (Ordnance Survey, 6-inches to 1 mile, Derbyshire sheet XXV. N.W., edition of 1921).

The *Courier* makes the point that slum clearance was then displacing a number of people in Chesterfield, particularly those in receipt of a pension. Rhodes' idea was to 'provide the maximum comfort in the minimum space.' The plans were first submitted in September 1912 but had been reworked prior to their resubmission in 1914. At the former date they had included a separate bedroom, but this had been redesigned into a bedsitting room, the bed being 'draped during the day with a curtain . . .' The rework had been necessary 'as the prices of building materials has continuously advanced the conditions have made it imperative from the point of view of economy to amend the specifications in order that low rent advantage might be retained.'¹

Other facilities included step-free access (apart from the one step into the property), a sink in one corner of the living room, pantry, water closet and coal place. There were two front windows – one into the living room the other into the water closet. The living room floor was to be laid with red quarry tiles – the bed portion having wooden blocks. The properties were to be erected on the Wharton works end of Piccadilly Road as soon as levels and sewer works were completed. The cottages were designed to be part of a much larger enterprise. 'A company is to be formed to undertake the building of the block and to proceed afterwards with the construction of larger cottages suited to the requirements of the poorer working class.' The *Courier* hoped that those who had expressed their interest in a similar earlier (but presumably unsuccessful) scheme would now support this project.² The *Courier* was able to report in early May 1914 that building of the cottages was up to the roof trusses, with rent 'to be kept in the neighbourhood of 2s 6d a week.'³

¹All quotations and details on the properties are from *Derbyshire Courier* (DC), 21 February 1914.

²*ibid.*

³DC, 9 May 1914.

Builder and Chesterfield Corporation Alderman William Rhodes, who T. F. Williams describes in his volume of a *History of Chesterfield*, as having a 'notable grasp' on housing issues, went on to become a member of the National Housing and Town Planning Council. A report he prepared for Chesterfield Corporation in 1917 on reasons for the housing shortage chiefly blamed two Parliamentary Acts. These had proposed taxes on increases in the site value of urban land after it was built on. This had consequently depressed the market in rentable small property. Rhodes recommended that government and municipalities should act together after the war on planned estates.⁴ On Rhodes' death in 1941, the *Derbyshire Times* stated that;

Before the last war he drew up a scheme for the provision of small cottages for all people at small rents, and on the instructions of the late Mr C.P. Markham built four in Piccadilly as an experiment. The war held up the development of the scheme, but in more recent years a considerable number of cottages have been built in Chesterfield on similar lines.⁵

The Chesterfield Housing Company

But what of the Chesterfield Development Company? This appears to have morphed into the Chesterfield Housing Company. Reporting on a meeting of the Chesterfield Allotment Holders' annual meeting, the *Derbyshire Courier*, in its edition of 14 March 1914 has a Councillor Glossop reporting on plans for a new Chesterfield Housing Company.⁶ Two months later the same newspaper was able to announce 'rapid progress' towards floating a company 'which as Ald. C.P. Markham stated at the Chesterfield Town Council a fortnight ago, is being floated for the purpose of providing suitable houses for working-class tenants...' By this time the company prospectus had been sent to London for approval, with publication to follow. £1 shares would be issued – with the directors apparently being paid nothing 'until the shareholders can be paid a dividend of 5 per cent.' Tenants would also be able to purchase their dwellings 'on the basis of an easy payments system...' The *Courier* ended by extolling landowners to make available cheap land to the company;

Thus the whole scheme is one in which the capitalist, the land-owner and the workman can join to their mutual advantage, and – what is perhaps the greatest point of all – to the advantage of the town in its big development and improvement scheme.⁷

The same newspaper reported in its edition of 18 April 1914 that Markham wanted the town council to lease houses from this new company.

The *Courier*, in its edition of 20 June 1914, published the prospectus of the Chesterfield Housing Company. Ald. C.P. Markham was, according to the newspaper, the chief mover of the company. By this time Markham's interest in what might be termed industrial housing – loosely explained as housing for workers – was to the fore. He appears to have become especially interested in this subject and that of sanitary conditions during the 1910s.⁸ Markham pursued a policy at the Staveley Coal and Iron Company (where he was chairman and director) of providing housing for workers employed there. Efforts were made in Staveley to form a housing trust with dwellings built, probably those in the Lowgates/Netherthorpe area.⁹

It is difficult to comprehend today how much power local industrialists such as Markham could exercise. Markham (1865-1926) held a number of public offices. He was, for example, a member of Chesterfield Corporation from 1895 – 1920, Mayor of Chesterfield three times (when that office probably carried significantly more power politically than it does now), chairman and director of the one of the area's biggest employers and associated with many others. He was largely regarded as the 'uncrowned king of Chesterfield.' It is reasonably well-known that in 1912 Markham had contributed £10,000 out of his own pocket to help the corporation clear the notorious slums known as 'The Dog Kennels', which led to the driving of the aptly named Markham Road through the area.¹⁰ There were other gifts that he made in and out of the borough. Markham's utterances were keenly followed by local newspapers.

⁴T.F. Wright, *History of Chesterfield Volume 4: Chesterfield – development of the modern town, 1851 – 1939*, (1992), p.221.

⁵DT, 10 January 1941. The four cottages were undoubtedly the six described in this article.

⁶DC, 14 March 1914.

⁷DC, 2 May 1914.

⁸S.D. Chapman, *Stanton and Staveley a business history*, (1981), p. 170.

⁹Derbyshire Record Office, D 3808/1/2/10, Staveley Coal and Iron Company director's minutes, 29 January 1918, 31 May 1921. There are some references to this scheme at Staveley in contemporary newspapers, but this requires further investigation. See for example DC, 15 and 22 May 1920 (reporting a strike of workers employed on the company's housing scheme at Staveley) and 17, 24 & 31 July 1920. These references are too early for the development to be that at Hollingwood (see below), the land for which was not purchased until October 1920. The director's minutes of 29 August 1922 refer to rents of the Staveley Housing Association properties at Netherthorpe. Readers may remember my presentation on social housing, based around a case-study of Hollingwood, at the NEDIAS meeting in March 2013.

¹⁰Wright, (1992), p. 101. J. Hammerton, 'Story of a great industrialist', *Staveley Story*, (no date), pp. 11-19.

Usefully the *Courier* of 20 June 1914 places some context on the need for such an enterprise as the Chesterfield Housing Company. 114 houses were to have been pulled down due to the effect of Chesterfield Corporation's Improvement Act of 1914;

... there are many houses in the Borough in which two or more families reside, [consequently] there is an urgent need for additional accommodation. One of the objects of the newly-formed Company is to meet this demand and provide houses of a healthy and comfortable character, which may be rented at reasonable rates and purchased by the tenants. It is not intended to distribute large dividends amongst the shareholders, but, whilst securing an adequate return for the money invested, to provide the very best housing accommodation at the lowest possible rent or purchase price as the case may be. The share capital of the Company is £10,000 which is to be divided into 10,000 ordinary shares of £1 each.¹¹

The directors were listed as Ald. C. P. Markham, J.P. (of Ringwood Hall, 'Engineer, High Sheriff for the County of Derby'); Ald. G.A. Eastwood, J.P. (Brambling House 'Wagon Builder'); the Mayor Ald. E. Shentall, J.P. (The Bungalow, Walton, 'Fruit and Potato Merchant'); Major William Bradbury Robinson (Elm Lodge, Brampton 'Surgical Lint Manufacturer'); Ald. Samuel Hadfield, J.P. (The Bungalow, Saltergate, 'Pork Butcher'); Ald. William Rhodes, the managing director (Chatsworth Road, 'Builder'); Councillor George Clark (The Cedars, Chatsworth Road, 'Engineer')¹²; Councillor Robert Eyre, J.P. (Highfield Road, 'Hardware merchant') and Mr. William Murphy, J.P. (Gladstone House, 'Draper'). Councillor Alfred Glossop¹³ was listed as acting as secretary. The company's bankers were Williams Deacon's Bank Ltd.; solicitors W. & A. Glossop, Holywell Street and auditors Carline & Watson of Gluman Gate. Each director held shares to the nominal value of £200. Applications for shares were to be with the company's bankers on or before 29 June 1914. Preliminary expenses had amounted to an estimated £150.10s.¹⁴

Initial progress appears to have been fairly rapid, with the new company advertising for freehold land in the *Courier* during July of 1914 'in any part of Chesterfield, which is suitable for 'Artizans' Dwellings'.¹⁵ The previous month the newspaper, an obvious supporter of the new company, had expressed hopes that land could be obtained by the company, in the vicinity of 'the new pensioners' cottages', for erection of dwellings, particularly as a new road was in the course of being laid 'from Hady Hill, just above Mr Wharton's foundry to Crow Lane. . . about 800 yards in length. . .'¹⁶

Presumably Chesterfield Housing Company's progress was impeded by the need to concentrate on the Great War, which was declared in August 1914. In December 1916, at its second annual meeting the company reported that '...several schemes for laying out land in Chesterfield for building purposes were under consideration, and that an active movement will be made as soon as normal conditions prevailed.'¹⁷ What happened to the Chesterfield Housing Company and whether it actually built any homes still needs research. In February 1919 the *Derbyshire Times* reported C.P. Markham, when accepting a gift from workers at his Broad Oaks Works, as saying he wanted each man to have his own home; 'They would have to see if they could arrange a utility society whereby each employee would have a nice little house with garden etc. They did start the idea some years ago, but for some reason it fell through.'¹⁸ If that idea was the Chesterfield Housing Company, it should be noted that the company carried on until at the least the 1950s. In December 1950 it held its annual meeting, at which Alderman G. Clark announced he was intending to resign as the chairman – an office he had held since 1934. He was then described as possibly the only surviving original director, a post he would still maintain. Major Compton Glossop would succeed him as chairman, the Major having been a director since 1943.¹⁹ In 1938, at the twenty-third annual general meeting it was reported that the 'usual dividend was passed for payment', the registered office was described as '38 Holywell Street'.²⁰

A renewed housing effort

Circumstances somewhat changed towards the end of the Great War as the country started to gear up for economic recovery – what follows is a very brief and perhaps over-simplified summary.

¹¹DC, 20 June 1914.

¹²A mechanical engineer. Wright, (1992), p. 145.

¹³A solicitor, presumably with the family business W. & A. Glossop. Wright, p. 145.

¹⁴Information in this paragraph sourced from DC, 20 June 1914.

¹⁵DC, 11, 14, 18 and 21 July 1914.

¹⁶DC, 27 June 1914.

¹⁷DC, 16 December 1916.

¹⁸*Derbyshire Times* (DT), 22 February 1919.

¹⁹DT, 1 December 1950. Unfortunately there is no description of what, if any building schemes had been carried out.

²⁰DT, 26 November 1937. Again, there is no description of what, if any building schemes had been carried out.

A reconstruction committee was formed in 1916 with housing amongst its elements. This morphed into a series of panels, with one for housing. In June 1917 a committee was formed with Liberal M.P. Sir John Tudor Walters (Postmaster General and M.P. for Brightside) involving Raymond Unwin as one of three architects on the committee. The so-called Tudor Walters report was published a few weeks before the November 1918 Armistice. Unwin's chief biographer Mervyn Miller has said the report 'represented the most comprehensive statement on low density building.' It contained recommendations on desirable housing types and sizes of rooms – much of it based on work by Unwin at Hampstead and Letchworth. From this was ultimately derived a new Housing and Town Planning Act (of 1919) which gave a statutory responsibility for housing (aided by the state) to local councils. There was also a housing design manual which was chiefly an Unwin work.²¹ (Raymond Unwin (1863 – 1940) (later Sir) had local connections. He had worked for the Staveley Coal and Iron Company in his earlier years and formed a partnership with his brother-in-law Barry Parker. They designed St Andrew's Church, Barrow Hill and several houses, forming a reputation for both design and planning. Unwin was influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, Socialist ideals and Ebenezer Howard's 'garden city' concept. He went on to design and advise on housing and estates using low density principles, some with Parker. Unwin became known as perhaps the 'most influential [English town planner] of his time').²²

Locally Chesterfield made much progress in building so-called 'homes fit for heroes', particularly as the corporation had identified a need for low cost housing pre-war. As an example of the continuing housing needs in the borough, in October 1915 Alderman Spooner had offered to erect 'ten or a dozen working men's tenements within the next six months to ease the demand for such dwellings.' The need had been made more acute by the corporation's demolition of properties following closing orders.²³ Following a report by the Medical Officer of Health in December 1916 on overcrowding and the need to alleviate this, a special housing committee had been formed with chairman Alderman William Rhodes. In January 1917 this committee agreed a scheme was needed for at least some 200 houses. This was expedited by a special subcommittee comprising Ald. Rhodes along with Councillors Glossop and Edmunds.²⁴ The construction of the St Augustine's estate progressed in early 1920.²⁵ These moves, though, were not without their critics. In October 1920, just before elections for the new council of the enlarged borough, seven Labour members resigned from the housing committee citing the 'slow pace of housing construction' as their principal reason.²⁶

Chesterfield Rural District Council (C.R.D.C. – which then included Staveley) was, unfortunately, not so quick off the mark with practical building – C.P. Markham becoming a leading critic of that council aided by the local press. 'Paper houses' according to the *Courier* in December 1920 when the C.R.D.C. admitted it had not laid a single brick of its 'wanted' 2,549 dwellings.²⁷ A particularly noteworthy outburst at the time was Markham describing the rural district councillors as a 'lot of old farmers'.²⁸

Piccadilly Road's involvement in what might now be termed social housing did not finish with the small bed-sitter development. In February 1919 local newspapers reproduced a plan for a large 'garden city' type development at Hollingwood, proposed by Markham.²⁹ A second scheme was planned, for, as the *Courier* put it 'the hillside in Tapton parish behind the Chesterfield Midland Railway Station and the Broad Oaks Works' and there was also talk of the forming of a public utility society to oversee these developments.³⁰ These developments were eventually handled by the Industrial Housing Association (I.H.A.), which was formed in 1922. Chiefly a vehicle of Lord Aberconway with C.P. Markham – this association could take advantage of government loans to build housing for its constituent members. Locally these included the Staveley Coal & Iron Company, the Sheepbridge Coal & Iron Company and Markham & Company (1925) Ltd.³¹ Thus, for the latter company, were built the 'new houses' on Piccadilly Road, not far from the original 1914 bungalows of William Rhodes.

The I.H.A. built some 12,000 houses in the 1920s. Estates were planned with generally standardised house

²¹This summary is chiefly condensed from Mervyn Miller, *Raymond Unwin. garden cities and town planning*, (1992), pp. 160 – 171.

²²J.S. Curl, *Oxford dictionary of architecture*, (2000), p. 691.

²³DC, 5 October 1915.

²⁴Wright, (1992), p. 220.

²⁵DC, 14 February 1920.

²⁶Wright, (1992), p. 242.

²⁷DC, 11 December 1920. 100 houses were apparently planned for Staveley.

²⁸DT, 9 June 1923.

²⁹DT, 15 February 1919; DC, 22 February 1919.

³⁰DC, 22 February 1919.

³¹John Tudor Walters, *Building of twelve thousand houses*, (1927). See also P. Riden, 'Company housing in the Derbyshire coalfield', *North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeological Society (NEDIAS) newsletter* 12, November 2003, pp. 3-4.

and bungalow designs – not that different to those indicated in the housing design manual. This is perhaps one reason why I.H.A. developments are sometimes confused with inter-war council housing schemes. Other I.H.A. developments locally were at Hollingwood (though not the design announced by Markham in 1919), Poolsbrook and Duckmanton – all for the Staveley Coal & Iron Company; at Newbold (a small development at Littlemoor Crescent); Glapwell (Bramley Vale) and Langwith for the Sheepbridge Company. Those who are more interested in the I.H.A. are referred to the 1927 account of the company ‘The Building of Twelve Thousand Houses’ by its secretary Sir John Tudor Walters.³²

Darrel Clark and Jacqueline Currell have previously written in NEDIAS newsletters (numbers 10 and 12 respectively) about a further example of social housing in Chesterfield.³³ This was when Robinsons pursued their own Wheatbridge Housing Association in the 1918 – 1922 period, which appears to have commenced following an address by Alderman Rhodes to the company’s Holme Brook Works Council in July 1918.³⁴ In February 1919 Mr P.M. Robinson ‘presided over a meeting . . . under the auspices of the Committee of the Holme Brook Works’ Council, to consider the question of forming a Public Utility Association for building houses for the employees of the firm.’³⁵ This envisaged 112 houses built on garden suburb principles on land between Brockwell Lane and Ashgate Road.³⁶ The first sod of this development was cut at Ashgate Road in March 1920.³⁷ Employees of the firm were encouraged to become shareholders.³⁸ In June 1922 it was reported that the Wheatbridge Housing Association had erected 32 houses.³⁹ By 1955, 36 houses were available for employees to rent.⁴⁰

Social housing in Chesterfield took great leaps forward under the auspices of the Chesterfield Corporation during the interwar period. In addition to the St Augustines estate another large development was constructed at Boythorpe.⁴¹

The provision of what we would now term social housing before and after the First World War needs greater exploration than can be allowed here. Such provision must, however, be read in conjunction with the need for employers such as C.P. Markham at the Staveley Coal & Iron Company to attract and retain employees. Here the need was so great that, for example, the company had tried, largely unsuccessfully, in 1925, to attract miners from County Durham.⁴² The chief drivers for the Hollingwood development appear to have been the continued development of the Devonshire Works and a new Do Well colliery – the latter eventually failed.⁴³ The I.H.A. houses, like those of the Wheatbridge Housing Association were, of course, tied homes – if you lost your job you lost your home.

Conclusions

In Piccadilly Road can be found two attempts at social housing. One – the small ‘bed-sitter bungalows’ was an attempt by informed citizens (chiefly William Rhodes and C.P. Markham) to start a practical movement aimed at addressing some of the issues that demolition of sub-standard dwellings in the borough of Chesterfield were causing. Attempts were then made to start a local housing company, but unfortunately the First World War seems to have intervened.

After that war renewed attempts were made to construct social housing. Chesterfield Corporation made great strides at building new homes. Less successful were those by the neighbouring rural district council. This resulted in some friction between that council and local industrialists. Alternative schemes led by the Industrial Housing Association, perhaps at least partially resulted from this inertia. The I.H.A. built a scheme (also on Piccadilly Road) as part of a much larger programme across the country. The name of C.P. Markham features largely in such schemes.

Today the two social housing schemes on Piccadilly Road, though not greatly known, point us towards the schemes of yesterday which aimed to provide better housing stock and address the need to attract and retain workers to local industries.

³²Tudor Walters, (1927).

³³D. Clark ‘Homes fit for workers (or, as yet, an unsolved mystery)’, *NEDIAS newsletter* 10, May 2003, pp. 3 – 5 and J. Currell, ‘Robinson’s “model village”’, *NEDIAS newsletter* 12, November 2003, pp. 5 – 6

³⁴D. Clark, (2003), p. 3.

³⁵*Robinsons of Chesterfield centenary*, (1939), p. 39.

³⁶D. Clark, (2003), p. 3.

³⁷DC, 13 March 1920.

³⁸*Robinson & Sons Ltd., 1839 – 1989*, (1989), p.16.

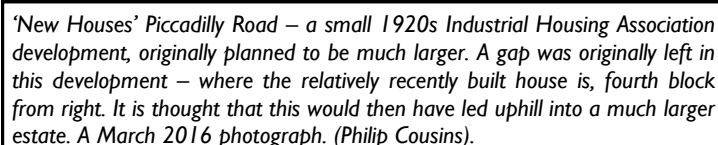
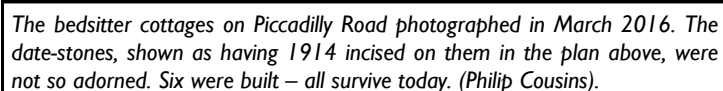
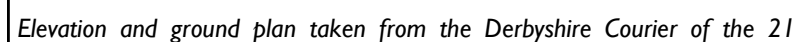
³⁹Clark, (2003), p. 5, quoting *The Link*, June 1922, p. 7.

⁴⁰*The employees handbook of Robinson & Sons, Ltd, Chesterfield*, (1955), p.14.

⁴¹J. Murphy, *Aspects of Walton*, (2016), p. 6.

⁴²DT, 20 February 1926.

⁴³DT, 16 January 1926. The mine was situated within the Devonshire works complex.



Tour – the Industrial Thames

Thinking of an interesting couple of “industrial heritage” days? Heritage of Industry’s Industrial Explorer trip on 1-4 June will be looking at the River Medway from Maidstone to the confluence with the Thames.

The lower reaches of the river have important maritime history, the most obvious survival being Chatham Naval Dockyard. There were also naval and other military installations on the Isle of Sheppey including gunpowder works. Chatham has also been the home of the Royal Engineers since 1750 and there are many buildings associated with this. As well as the naval ship-building there were other boatyards in the area where Thames barges and other ships were built.

The whole area was home to a significant paper making industry. Newsprint for the daily papers was made here as well as better quality paper. The tour explores the remains of this industry including an industrial railway. Faversham was important for the manufacture of gunpowder and other explosives and will be included in our itinerary.

The Friday will be spent looking at the lower Medway valley and the town of Maidstone, visiting Aylesford where there was an important paper mill and will continue to look at Allington on the river Medway. The day finishes with a walk to look at some of the older mill sites just outside Maidstone.

On Saturday, they visit Faversham and include a visit to the 18th century Chart Gunpowder Mills, said to be the oldest of their kind in the world, powder from which was used at the battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo. Shipbuilding will also be included and then Sittingbourne including a visit to the Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway. We will finish the day on the Isle of Sheppey discovering what is left of the military installations and the steel works.

Sunday will be spent exploring Rochester and Chatham finishing with a visit to the Naval Dockyard to look at the bridge crossing the Medway and at the effects the development of the Dockyard had on the town of Chatham, lunch in the dockyard.

Booking: <http://www.citysafaris.co.uk/2017/NorthKent/NorthKent2.html> for full details and booking.

Chairman’s Chat

Cliff Lea

It’s always good to see old established buildings, particularly those that are a feature of the landscape brought back into use for a new future. Local to us there are so many that await news, or where the future has now been assured such as the redevelopment, after decades of decline of Walton Mill on the Hipper corridor parallel to Chatsworth Road, surely one of the biggest “feature” buildings in Chesterfield, and yet a building that very few of the population have actually seen because it’s away from the main road system. Shortly to be changed as the redevelopment takes hold.

I visited one such feature building on the edge of Manchester the other day, and this is an incredible transformation of another old cotton mill. But this time the classic mill building is being returned right back into the top echelons of the industry from which it came. Tower Mill, Dukinfield, was originally set up in 1866 producing cotton yarn through 44,000 spindles – a massive operation then, but of course it went the way of the rest of the cotton industry. English Fine Cottons – a group with deep Dutch pockets - has invested many millions on the site in the assumption that there is still room at the very top for the very finest quality thread – and I do mean the world’s best. They import only the very finest raw cotton, they are using only the very latest and best equipment (all German) and aim only to produce best results – and it’s working: their customer list is at the highest end of the industry. They have no wish to come down market, they employ very few people, and the whole operation demonstrates great confidence and brilliant vision.



Tower Mill, Dukinfield as it had become in 2011. It now has a visionary present and future!

Finally, we learned this year of Jacky Currell’s passing from Motor Neurone Disease as it took hold over a few months all too quickly. All our members have seen the sparkling NEDIAS display boards – Jacky used her artistic passion to develop great displays for us – we’ll miss her. What I didn’t know until I saw her in Ashgate Hospice, was that she had also designed the wonderful stained glass windows in the hospice chapel. And true to form there was her sense of humour there as well – she would always ask visitors whether they had spotted the frog. If you’re visiting, find the chapel, sit facing the windows and look out for it. A touch of Jacky.

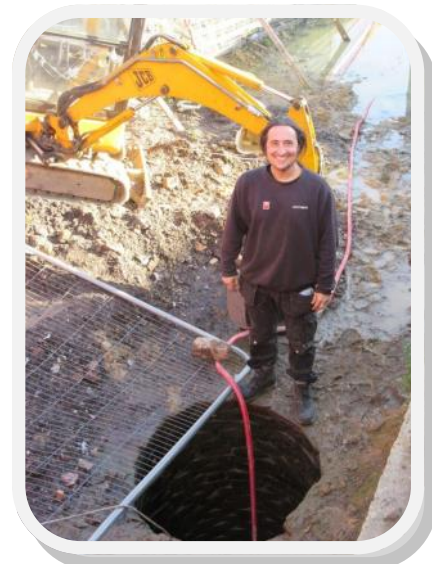
And finally

.... Pearsons Pottery

Dave Revitt, one of the residents in Pottery Lane, Whittington Moor, when recently digging in the back yard to locate the source of dampness in the house, found something he didn't expect, but perhaps what maybe could have been foreseen.



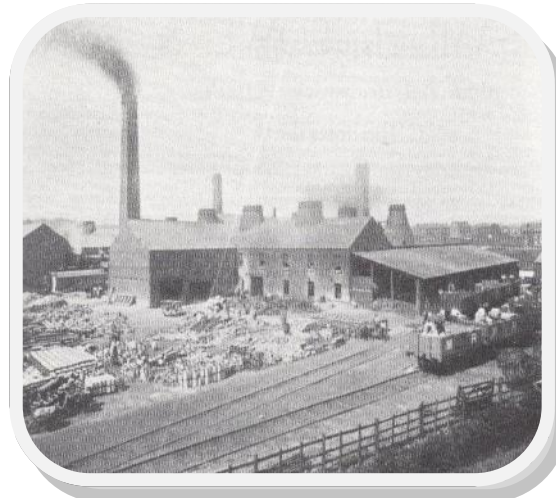
Quite a few finds



... and a great hole!



It has been suggested that this is a flue for a downdraft kiln. The horizontal tunnel to the kiln can be seen at the base, and the property owner has explored along part of this tunnel.



Pearsons, 1899. From "Illustrated Guide to Chesterfield" (Courtesy Chesterfield Library)

COPY DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT EDITION: 8th July 2017

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, Les Mather, David Palmer.

Published by: North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society.

Editor: Cliff Lea
☎ 01246 234 212
or e-mail: cliff@nedias.co.uk.

Assistant Editor: Doug Spencer

The authors retain copyright of the contents.

