



# THE PARAGON

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## *The Journal of the Stocksbridge & District History Society*

### STOCKSBRIDGE AND ITS MILLS REVISITED

Part 6 - by Basil Spooner

#### DEEPCAR CORN MILL

This was undoubtedly the oldest mill in the Little Don Valley. In fact Joseph Kenworthy regarded that the distinct traces of an old dam found by his brother Benjamin when he laid a sewer through the fields numbered 3234 and 3235 on the Ordnance Map of 1893 were of great age and were associated with a Mill referred to in 1293.

There was a mill in existence at Deepcar in 1575, and it is referred to in the Account Book of William Dickinson who was the Bailiff of Sheffield at that time. This old mill was a plain structure, built from large stone blocks, (as was a nearby cottage where the miller Rychard lived)..

The mill is also mentioned in the Waldershef Land Tax assessment of 1774.

In1797, the mill was occupied by Thomas Grayson, the owner being Lord Melbourne.

Joseph Grayson rented it for some years, during which time large quantities of flour were delivered by wagon to Saltersbrook where carriers from Lancashire and Cheshire took it over along with supplies from Midhope, Thurstone and Oxspring. The return carriage consisted of miscellaneous goods for the Sheffield district, taken as part payment.

Abraham Windle erected a new mill at some time between 1838 (when it was occupied by Benjamin Langton) and 1849, and this was located off Vaughton Hill at the entrance to Don Field, which is Mill Lane. This is recorded in a Sheffield Directory as "Surttees and Windle, corn millers, of Deepcar. The census of 1841 lists William Fieldsend of Deepcar as a Corn Miller.

In 1881, there were seven listed millers in the census, which indicates that a flourishing business was in operation in this locale. This labour force included the Townrow family who lived on Bridge Row, and it was their daughter Harriet who married into the Spooner family and would become my great grandmother.

From hereon, the census details show that the mill continued operating at least up to 1881, and evidently had closed by 1891 as by then, the references to corn milling had ceased. This seems to be in parallel with the demise of the Hunshelf Corn Mill.

According to the Historical Notes on Stocksbridge and District by Olive Hepworth, the following information is given:

Wortley Corn Mill taken down 1880 to 1882.

Deepcar Corn Mill built May 11th 1720 (?), and taken down in 1892.

Hunshelf Corn Mill taken down in 1892 by S.Fox & Co.

Midhope Corn Mill taken down in 1908.

#### DEEPCAR WIRE MILL

The 1871 Trades Directory contains the following information:

William Beet built a small wire mill near the old corn mill at Deepcar. Beets wire mill was afterwards used for a short time by Messrs. Robert Grey & Co. of Sheffield for rolling sheet steel when crinolines were in fashion. The two cottages which stood below the house where the late Thomas Herbert lived, were erected by William Beet for the wire drawers who worked at his little mill in the valley.

Our local Census returns show that many wire drawers were listed continually from 1841 onwards, the first references being John Beet aged 25, and George Senior, also 25, both of Deepcar as detailed in the Bolsterstone East section. I believe that the location of this mill and cottages was on the west side of Vaughton Hill after perusing a limited amount of photographic evidence and various maps.

#### THE WHARNCLIFFE FIRE CLAY WORKS.

These works were built sometime around 1870 by John Armitage as an expansion of his operations at the Henholmes, which were proving to be too small. The necessary raw materials were available in the vicinity, and early maps show two tramways running to the works from the slopes of the Wortley/Wharnclyffe slopes.

There were two water wheels powered by water diverted from the river at Soughley, and in the 1890s, a water turbine replaced one of these wheels, and these together with a steam engine, supplied the necessary power for the works.

These works was taken over in 1903 together with the rest of the Armitage business.

#### THE TIN MILL

This mill was built in 1743 and ceased to operate some time before 1870.

Reginald Andrews recalls the mill still being in situ when he was a boy though it had long ceased working and it looked picturesquely ancient and complete with its ready dam.

The mill was an oblong building, and on either side of it was a water wheel so arranged as to run in opposite directions and fitted with heavy stone segments within the rims such that they would act as flywheels.

Between the two water wheels stood the rolling mill, one wheel driving the top roll, and the other, the lower roll, but without gearing to couple the rolls together.

On the housings were platforms on which stood two men who manipulated the screws which raised and lowered the rolls in order to vary the gap between them, and as they came closer together, this reduced the thickness of the iron sheet which was being passed back and forth through them.

A furnace was on site for heating the special quality Charcoal Iron blooms from which the sheets were produced in thicknesses ranging from approx half an inch down to quite thin gauges. These thinner sheets were then slit into lengths probably at the Thurgoland Wire Works and subsequently used in the production of wire by drawing through plates, which was the precursor to the wire drawing process as we now understand it.

The tin mill is believed to have worked in conjunction with Wortley Top and Low Forges and was operated by the ironmasters responsible for the forges.

## LOWOODS GANISTER AND FIREBRICK WORKS

(Formerly known as The Chemistry)

Details of the origin of this business are somewhat sparse and the best account that I have been able to provide is as follows.

In Whites Directory for 1864, Abraham Windle was listed under Deepcar as a timber merchant, corn miller and pyroigneous acid manufacturer. He was also the proprietor and manager of three chemistries, one of which was on part of the site which was to become Lowoods Works and he also owned a 156 acre farm.

This Chemical Works was amongst the earliest of its type in the country, and Works like these produced charcoal for use in the manufacture of steel in Sheffield, usually by "The Little Mesters," and the acid, which lead-houses used for oxidising blue lead.

Mr. Windle was 84 years of age when he died as a bachelor in 1884 and he lies buried at Wortley, where evidently he was born and baptised there. It seems that the main beneficiary of his considerable estate was John Windle Taylor who was listed as owner of the Deepcar Corn Mill on a schedule of mills in the valley in 1874.

In Hinchliffes 1908 Almanack, a photograph of the Chemistry is shown, and which describes it as it was in 1866, and which looked well established by then. It was situated adjacent to Deepcar Station and the Sheffield, Manchester and Lincolnshire Railway Company opened the through route in this area in 1845, and therefore there would have been available the means to distribute the products.

Alongside the foregoing, I now refer to our local 1841 (and 1851) Census returns for Bolsterstone West in which the following family group is listed at Spink Hall;

John Grayson - age 34 - farmer of 156 acres. (same as

Abraham Windle)

Mary Lowood - age 35 - sister

John Lowood - age 5. (born July 1835)

William Lowood - age 4 years.

(John was subsequently baptised as John Grayson Lowood at Bolsterstone, and it is he who would become the owner of Lowoods Works that carried his name.

John spent his early years in the Sheffield and Hallamshire Bank, and in 1868, his uncle Mr. John Grayson retired from his business through ill health, which he had long carried on as a firestone quarry owner in Attercliffe Road. He expressed the wish that his nephew should continue with it, who duly obliged.

After taking over he remained as head of the business for many years during which time he had acquired by 1870, and worked and developed with great success the undertaking at Deepcar, i.e. the Chemistry, (and another at Middlesboro).

The era of development that he inaugurated was chiefly characterised by the substitution of ganister and silica for the previously used firestone, and the manufacturing emphasis shifted to firebricks and other heat resisting products.

The necessary raw materials by way of ganister, coal, and clay were all readily available locally as John Armitage and others found.

An entirely new complexion was thus given to the business, while the greatly increased usefulness of its products gave rise to a rapid expansion of its operations, and a need to provide housing for the additional workforce.

The 1881 Census for Hunshelf, details the occupants of only the first 29 houses in Florence Buildings, and these may well have been under construction at that time as there were 56 properties when building work was completed.

These houses stood for approximately 100 years before being demolished.

On 23rd August 1873, a works outing by train to Cleethorpes was arranged for his employees and their families who worked at Deepcar and in Sheffield, the latter I believe was another refractory at Loxley. It was unfortunate that this train was involved in a railway accident at Retford and it resulted in a number of fatalities.

In 1890, the business was converted into a limited company and Mr. Grayson Lowood was appointed as Chairman and Managing Director.

We have an account of his sale of land to Thomas Oxley upon which the Fruit Farm in Stooksbridge was established.

After a short illness, he died in August 1902 aged 68 years at his residence at Swinton Hall and he was buried in the General Cemetery in Sheffield.

He had outlived two wives and left four daughters and one son, the latter being only eight years of age.

The 1901 Census lists the Lowood Institute for the first time together with a caretaker and his wife. By 1902, the Institute was being referred to as the Lowood Workmens Club.

The business continued to flourish for many years and eventually became part of a succession of larger organisations including General Refractories Ltd., Genefax and G.R.Stein before being closed down sometime in the early seventies.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

In the preparation of a series of short articles about our local mills, I have referred to various publications by others who are acknowledged as follows:

A History of Penistone and District by David Hey.  
How Our Ancestors Lived, by David Hey.

A History of Stocksbridge Works by Hazel Stansfield.  
The Founders and Builders of Stocksbridge Works by Joseph Sheldon.

Hinchliffes 1908 1909 and 1910 Stocksbridge Almanacs.  
Stocksbridge Cooperative Society Jubilee History by Joseph Kenworthy. 1910.

The Early History of Stocksbridge and District by Joseph Kenworthy. 1914

The Mills of the Ewden and Little Don Valleys by Wendy E. Goodhind.

The Stocksbridge Story by Trevor Lodge.

History of Stocksbridge by Jack Branston.

A Concise History of Stocksbridge and District by Brenda Duffield.

Local Industries of the Past by Jacqueline Stafford. (A series of articles published in the Fox Magazine).

The Story Of Wortley Ironworks by Reginald Andrews 1950.

Thomas Jeffreys Map of Yorkshire dated 1772.

The Fairbanks Survey (Map of Stocks Bridge) dated 1793.

John Armitage of Deepcar. (A published article by Mr. Coultas – Fox Magazine Autumn 1962).

Folding process details from [www.mirfieldmemories.co.uk/mills.htm](http://www.mirfieldmemories.co.uk/mills.htm)

The South Yorkshire Express. August 8th 1902 edition

## STOCKSBRIDGE COLLEGE 1958 – 2000

### A Short History by Harry Ibberson

In 1958 Stocksbridge Works and the then West Riding County Council together provided Steel

Technology courses for the employees of the steelworks. It was to be known as the Stocksbridge Continuation School but it had no permanent buildings.

The classes were held in hired venues around Stocksbridge, such as the British Hall, Works Meeting Rooms, Welfare Hall and Stocksbridge Secondary School. There were few full time members of staff and most of the classes were tutored by part time staff.

Early in the 1980s, a double prefab module was installed on the Hole House Lane market site; it had a central room which became the Principals first office.

As the training provision at the Works developed with Belmont training centre, courses in electrical and mechanical engineering were required. In the middle of the decade, the West Riding CC decided to develop the Hole House site with a purpose built, three storey College building and this was duly opened in 1988 by the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson.

The new College provided an engineering workshop, drawing office, metallurgy, science & physics laboratory, microscope room, library and arts & craft areas, typing room and general office and staff room.

New full time staff were recruited and with the existing part time staff, were divided across the three departments; Science &

Technology, Business Management and Adult Education all administered by the Principal and Vice Principal and two Heads of Departments.

There were four Principals in the first thirty years; Raynor Hewitt 1958 – 71, Arthur Colledge 1971 – 75, Frank Topliss 1975 – 86 and Philip Auckland 1986 – 88.

The site was expanded in 1971 with a further two storey building for the expanding Business Studies provision together with a larger library and further staff rooms. There were plans for further expansion providing extra engineering workshops, but these were dropped following the 'move' into the Sheffield boundary in 1974. Six mobile units were installed on the redundant DES site and the old Victorian National School on Carr Road was also acquired.

Adult education continued to expand until 1985 and the 1988 enrolment level of 18000 student hours had increased to 88000 hours per year by 1985. This increase coincided with the absorption of the smaller Bradfield Adult Education area into the Stocksbridge College programme. This year saw the highest staffing levels ever required at the College with 63 full time lecturers; 12 technicians; 6 clerical workers; 8 cleaners; 6 canteen workers and 2 caretakers, all employed by the College.

In the early 70s, partnerships with local high schools saw the advent of 14 – 16 year old GCSE education with pupils from Penistone, Ecclesfield and Bradfield being 'bussed in'. This formed the future Tertiary Colleges with pupils able to take 'A' level subjects in many subjects, Stocksbridge College concentrating on Technology, Art & Design and Business Studies.

As stated earlier, the College was funded by the WRCC but from the mid-80s, full cost courses were offered to industry for subjects such as Hydraulics, Electronics, Electrical Engineering, Business Management & Trade Union workings. Students came from many parts of the country and one particular course in Steel Making Technology attracted students from Saudi Arabia. In its final year, 40% of the funding came from this full cost course provision.

September 1988 saw a 'shake up', the Stocksbridge College then being administered from the Stannington site. The Tertiary provision for 6<sup>th</sup> form A level students was cancelled and A levels were no longer provided by Stocksbridge High and Bradfield Comprehensive School and in 1991 the partnership with these local secondary schools was terminated.

The original Hole House Lane site continued providing a diminishing programme of Adult Education classes until its closure in 2000. The building was then demolished in 2006

## SOCIETY NEWS

This seems to have been a busy quarter since the last edition of the Paragon and I must thank Basil for his excellent articles on the Mills in the Little Don Valley, well researched and well presented. He has mentioned a number of times that whilst researching he has uncovered mysteries and profiles of people that may never be answered due to the passage of time and events not having been chronicled.

We have been pleased this quarter to have received some generous donations to our heritage archive, the glass cake stand from Mrs Marion Hutton, where we could possibly attribute this to the Bolsterstone Glass Works and the

Bolsterstone ceramics from Mrs Todner. We are grateful and these will be handsomely displayed in the new Heritage Museum later this year.

We have also been given copies of two local works which we are pleased to receive for the archive and the [www.stocksbridges.co.uk](http://www.stocksbridges.co.uk) website. These are 'A History of Guiding in and around Stocksbridge' and 'The Life and Times of Jack Hanwell'. We thank the contributors and both items are gratefully received.

The full funding bid for the proposed Heritage Centre, in the Town hall, has now been compiled and submitted and we now await the HLF's considered reply.

We applied for a grant on the Sharing Scheme, of £10,000, for equipment, display cabinets; computers screens etc. to best display the Society artefacts and archive. If When we do succeed in the grant, we do need a group which can help with the organisation and running of the Heritage Centre, so please start thinking how you can contribute a couple of hours a month to this project.

#### CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I am informed by Brenda that this year is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the History Society in its present form, it having been reborn after the demise of Jack Branston and the original Kerworthy Fellowship.

In checking our archive newsletters, I noted that the then Chairman, Graham Norton, highlighted some of what he thought, were the failings of the Fellowship in the late 1980s. He mentioned the activities (or lack of them) of the committee and the average age of the members of the Society. Well I cannot question the support that I have had in my tenure as Chairman and their help with the Society and the projects. I do agree with his point about younger people joining the Society perhaps with new and fresh ideas. I would like to think that a Chairman in

25years time could be struggling with the same dilemma.

I have mentioned in the past the enquiries we get from all over the world in response to people viewing our website. One this week with thanks for what we are doing came from a lady in California USA, she had a request and a very poignant story. Here is the email in full and I hope we can get back to her with some pieces of her family jigsaw.

*I am researching the life of my great-grandmother, Mary Louisa Milcom Jones Mortimer. She was born in Midhopestones in 1873, the eldest daughter of Charles James Mortimer(CJM), the Midhopestones schoolmaster Joseph Kerworthy profiled in The Lure of Midhope-Cum-Langsett(pp.42-46). I am grateful to you for providing this publication.*

*We knew almost nothing about my great-grandmother's family, because some time after her mother died in 1881, she, as well as her sister Emma, was recruited by Maria Rye's emigration program for destitute little girls. In 1884, at age 11, she was shipped to Canada to live with strangers as their domestic servant. Despite the difficulty of her youth, she lived a long, happy, productive life. In her nineties, she described the beauty of her childhood home to me and even remembered her father with some fondness.*

*I am interested in locating the school trustees' records that explain when and why CJM's employment there ended, and also if my great-grandmother was ever enrolled in the school. I'd also appreciate any accounts you could recommend that might shed more light on life in Midhopestones from 1873-1883. Thank you.'*

We don't get requests like this all the time but people are very grateful for the information that we do provide and it makes us feel good that the website is doing exactly what we wanted when we first thought about it.

Dennis

#### PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR 2014

May 8 <sup>th</sup>	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	
June 12 <sup>th</sup>	THE WIRE MILLS OF THURGOLAND	Maurice Williams
July 10 <sup>th</sup>	ANNUAL OUTING TO SALFORD QUAYS	
August 14 <sup>th</sup>	LOCAL ASPECTS OF WW1	Dennis Pindar
September 11 <sup>th</sup>	WOMEN IN MINING	Rosemary Preece
October 9 <sup>th</sup>	THE SILVER SCREEN	Michael Gildersleve
November 13 <sup>th</sup>	KING GEORGE V (Local Developments 1910 - 1936)	Basif Spooner
December 11 <sup>th</sup>	CHRISTMAS RELATED EVENT (Pre booking - Members only)	
2015 January 8 <sup>th</sup>	WINTER RECESS (No Meeting)	
2015 February 12 <sup>th</sup>	THE HISTORY OF IZAL	Joan Jones

Why not visit our Website at - [www.stocksbridges.co.uk](http://www.stocksbridges.co.uk)

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