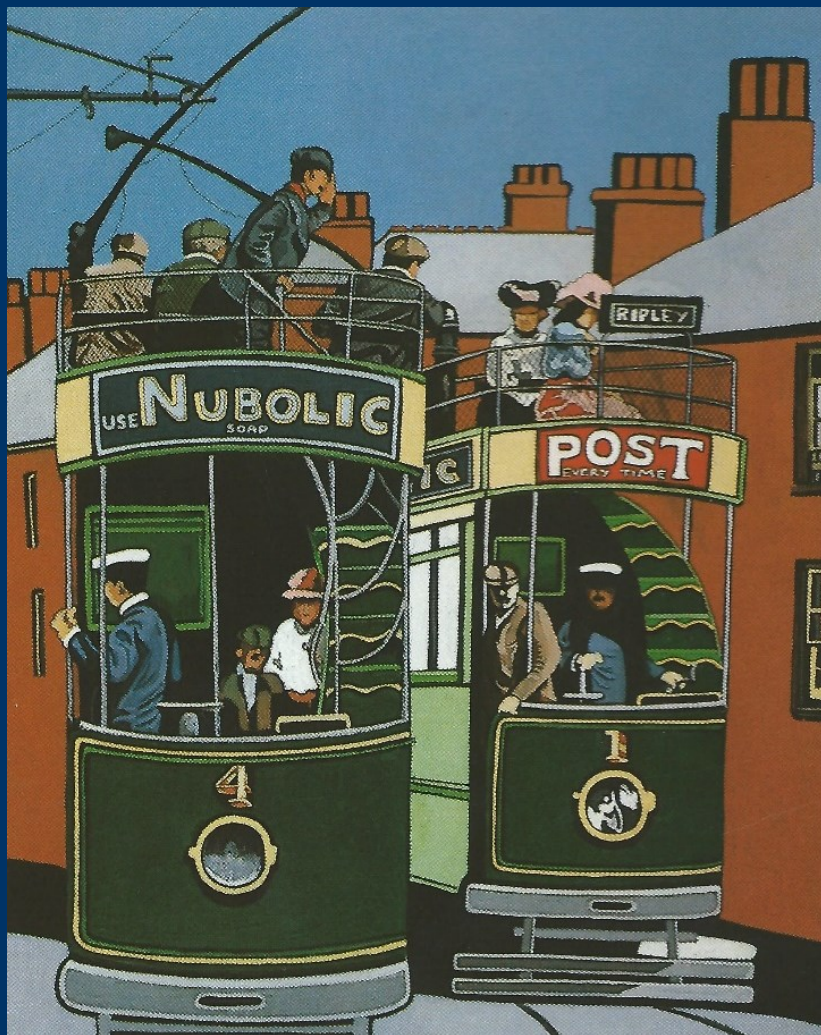


RIPLEY & DISTRICT
HERITAGE TRUST
DERBYSHIRE

Newsletter



Number **Eighteen**

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www.rdht.org.uk

Covid Update

There really isn't much to report. Given the age and vulnerability of many of our members, and the fact that the Town Hall remains closed, it seems unlikely that much will happen this year. I wouldn't repeat the 1914 slogan "It'll all be over by Christmas" either.

We continue to get the odd enquiry and even odder sale via the website, which is encouraging. Meanwhile, all we can do is to try to keep in touch and repeat the mantra: "Keep Safe".

Ernest Joseph Ellis-Fermor

One of the enquiries we've received recently concerned E.J. Ellis-Fermor, whose name survives in the solicitor's business just off the Market Place. The enquiry concerned the charity founded in his name after his death in 1933, and the garden that was created as a memorial. The charity still exists, but the garden is long gone; the plaque placed in it in 1953 apparently was still around somewhere (possibly in the AVBC car park) until recently. If anyone knows of its

whereabouts, the family would like to find it.

I began to research EJE's biography out of curiosity, and the more I looked, the more interesting he became.

He was born in 1860, the son of Charles Ellis, a clerk in the ordnance factory in Woolwich who seemed to do very well for himself, and who married Julia Turnley, the daughter of a solicitor. In 1875 he inherited land and shares from his uncle, but there was a clause in the will which insisted that he took his uncle's surname, Fermor, as well as his own. In 1876, he did just that, becoming Charles Ellis-Fermor. He was quite a character, but his story will have to wait.



Ernest Joseph Ellis-Fermor

After boarding school, Ernest was employed as a clerk in a solicitor's office and eventually took the Law Society exams and became a solicitor himself. He clearly had to work his way up, starting in Sussex, but then moving to Rugby and then Preston where he became Deputy Town Clerk. He moved to Ripley in 1893 to join an established practice run by Arthur Copson Peake.

Newspaper reports indicate that he started with minor cases, like one involving the malicious wounding of a dog, but soon moved on to civic cases like the re-routing of Booth Street, and was later to represent both the Butterley Company and Ripley Urban District Council.

He also began to take on public roles, being elected to the Council in 1896 and remaining on it, except for one short break, almost until his death, over 35 years. He was an overseer for the poor, on the Board of Guardians, Vice-President of the Hospital Committee, chair of the School Managers Board and of the Ripley Gas Company. There must have been little that happened in Ripley in the first three decades of the twentieth century that he did not know about.

Initially, he took up lodgings in the town, appearing in the 1901 census in Wood Street, possibly in the household of widow Sarah Wood. Later, he bought "Woodlands", a large house just off the Market Place, along with a number of other properties in the town. Before the days of estate agents, solicitors did most of the buying and selling of houses, and were in a good position to see where a profit might be made!

His obituary in 1933 described him as a "bachelor", and in law, this was probably true. He did, however, have a common law wife, Elisabeth Searancke, the daughter of George and Ruth Searancke of Moseley Street. George Searancke was a bootmaker from London who had gradually moved North, marrying



Woodlands
(pictures courtesy John Searancke)

Ruth Fox in Market Harborough in 1858 before moving to Ripley around 1860. They had six children. George died in 1899, leaving Ruth as a widow living in Moseley Street with Elisabeth and Constance, dressmakers, and Isabella, a telegraphist (maybe at the new telephone exchange down the street).

It seems likely that it was around 1902 that Ellis-Fermor employed Elisabeth as a housekeeper, and came to know the family. When Elisabeth became pregnant, however, he obviously felt that the relationship had to be covered up, and he arranged for her to go to Brighton to have the child. Brighton was a much more cosmopolitan place than Ripley, and he knew it well, so it was an obvious place to set up a sort of second home.

His grandson tells me that the reason he didn't marry Elisabeth was that he had previously been engaged to her sister, Isabella, and that he was afraid of being charged with breach of promise!

In 1911 he is found on the census in Brighton with Elisabeth and Violet, their daughter, in a lodging house at 39 Marine Drive. Elisabeth's surname is given as Fermor, and they are described as married, but I can find no record of the marriage. Violet's birth, however, was registered, in late 1904 in Brighton, her surname given as Ellis-Fermor.

Just before his death, he published a book, "Julian Scarlett" which the newspaper described as a "romance written when he was a young man". It was published in Ripley, but there seems no trace of it: I wonder if anyone knows the whereabouts of a copy?

On his death, he left about £1.7 million, in today's money, most of it to Violet, Elisabeth and Isabella. He specifically asked to be buried in Brighton, not Ripley.

A Hidden Waterway

We take turning on the tap for granted but not too long ago getting water was a household chore along with many others. Large urban areas had to look well outside their boundaries for their supply of clean water and the Peak District was the choice of Sheffield, Derby, Nottingham and Leicester. Jointly these cities constructed the dams on the remote watershed at Derwent and Howden along with the later Ladybower.

Equally important but far less well known are the pipes that transport the water

from the reservoirs to the urban conurbations. This trunk pipe line is known as the Derwent Valley Aqueduct but unlike famous canal or Roman aqueducts which span impressively across valleys this one is mostly hidden underground.

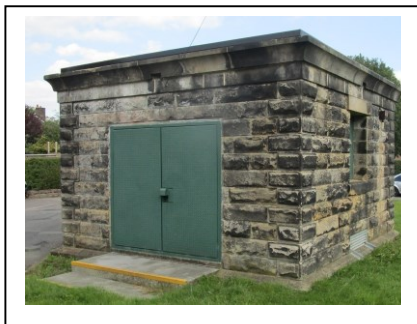
The supply to Sheffield branches off at Ashopton through a tunnel over four miles in length to the Rivelin reservoirs. The main aqueduct, which interests us, extends from Derwent Dam to the Ambergate service reservoir, a distance of 28 miles. Seven miles is constructed as cut and cover, 4 miles of tunnels, both 6' 3" diameter. The remaining 17 miles is carried by 45" diameter cast pipes.



Observant readers will be aware of evidence of the aqueduct passing through Ripley towards Nottingham from Ambergate. At Bullbridge a pipe bridge at the former Stevenson's Dye works once spanned the Cromford Canal. The line is also marked by disused inspection gates (seen here) which help us plot the route. At Rowan Avenue a solid stone structure forced amendment to the road

layout (see right) and on Peasehill Road next to the Greenway crossing an exposed pipe can be seen where it crossed the former railway.

Before the water passes through Ripley it has paused at the recently re-built Ambergate Reservoir. Originally completed in 1910, by 2008 it was nearing the end of its natural life. A crack around the perimeter walls, dating from the early years, had limited the reservoir's capacity from 128 MI to 120 and the condition of the roof slab made it unsafe to work on. It was built of mass concrete with only a part-height division wall, which meant the loss of three-quarters capacity when draining down for essential cleaning and inspection.



The first phase of the project saw the construction of a new reservoir consisting

of two 43.5MI cells, the maximum capacity possible for the available land adjacent to the existing reservoir. The second phase involved demolishing the original reservoir and constructing a 50MI single-cell reservoir in its place, bringing the total capacity up to 137MI.

That work is now complete; but what of the early works to get the water to Ambergate?. 'The Engineer' in March 1910 printed a report on the section between Grindleford and Rowsley, a section of nine miles. Of those, 4 miles were the relatively straightforward cut and cover along ground that offered a gently downward slope. Dig a trench, construct a brick pipe of six-foot diameter and back fill the trench.

In addition three tunnels were needed with a total length of a half mile. The remainder, nearly 5 miles, is in pipes. These were needed where the ground dropped below the required level of the aqueduct which ran from 684 feet above sea level at Bamford to 657 at Ambergate. The most significant syphon, as they are called, passed across Chatsworth Park. There is a picture of the contractor's railway passing right in front of the house.



The pipes were 45" diameter, made at Staveley in 12 foot sections. These were not identical because the pipes at the bottom of the syphon were required to stand a pressure of 150 lbs/sq inch and had a thicker wall. They weighed nearly 5

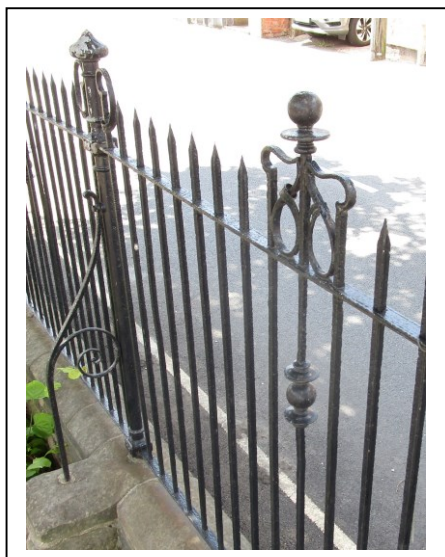
tons each, whilst those at the top weighed 2 tons less.

Precautions were taken should a burst occur, which would have rivalled the fountain at Chatsworth. A complicated valve would close off the supply while another would prevent back flow at the end point. All in all a remarkable piece of engineering and a piece of history still in use today.

Ken Brockway

Railing at the Talbot

Another road traffic incident. Was anyone hurt? What happened? Was it a stolen car? Who will repair the damage? I don't have all the answers. What I do know is that the railings by the Talbot Inn on Butterley Hill were seriously damaged and the twisted debris remained untouched for a long time. It was raised at a Ripley Heritage Trust committee meeting and not too long after that the damaged railing disappeared. Another long wait then while taking exercise during lockdown I spotted a remarkable change. If you haven't seen the new railings do go and take a look at the impressive new matching sections. I made contact with Derbyshire County Council Highways who kindly provided some answers.



The old damaged railings were removed from site for a pattern by Wrought Art a company based at Ascot Drive in Derby. This local company created new sections and delivered them back to the site. The installation was carried out by Derbyshire County Councils in-house workforce Construction Services. The total cost of the work was £11,462.00 and for me worth every penny. Let's hope they don't jump out in front of another passing vehicle.

If you like what you see and need similar work carried out contact Wrought Art at Unit 5, Wexford Court, Sandown Road,

Derby, DE24 8SP.

Minecraft: the Prequel

The snappy title is the name David Amos of Nottingham Trent University has given to his latest project, which is the subject of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. We're happy to be asked to be a supporting partner, using some of the archive of Butterley Company mining records.

The longer title perhaps explains a bit more : “The Photographic Story of East Midlands Coal (1965-2015)”.



Ormonde Colliery

The project's aims are twofold: firstly to investigate and add detail to the archive of photographs held by the Coal Authority at Mansfield, around 13000 of them from the East Midlands. Secondly to record the language and memories of those associated with the mines, and to make the archive accessible to schools.

We look forward to working with David (when and if we can!).

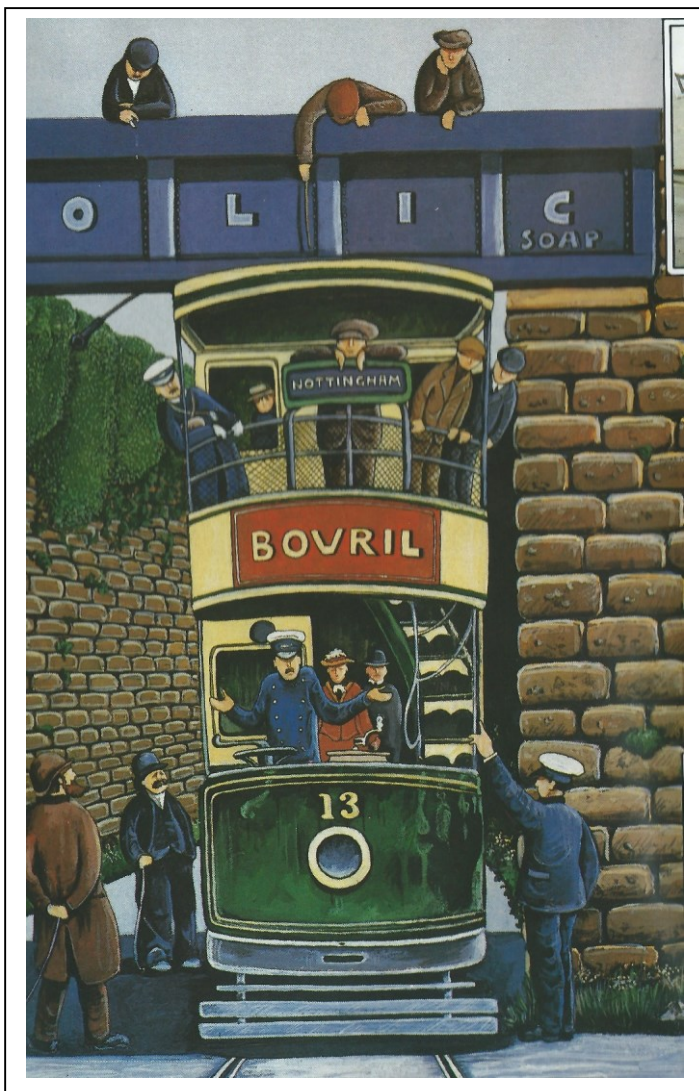
Rattlers Leaflets

A recent gift from Kate Cranswick was a few copies, in mint condition, of a leaflet produced by Nottinghamshire County Council in 1986. (We had a copy but it had seen better days).

The cover illustration is taken from this leaflet, as is the one below, which apparently shows one of the many accidents the trams were involved in.

The leaflet, among other items, traces the route of the Rattlers, with thumbnail pictures and brief comments on landmarks, from Ripley Co-op Square to its terminus outside the Nottingham Co-operative Society building.

Reading it now, it is interesting to see how much, even in this relatively recent publication, has changed. It is full of snippets, like the fact that tramcar drivers took their test on Church Hill, Heanor, which is half a mile long and drops by 175 feet.



The Day Before VE Day

Eric Brown, who shared some memories with us at the Heritage day last year (doesn't that seem long ago!), sent an email on 7th May 2020. I think it's worth giving it in full.



"I thought I would record my memories of 75 years ago today.....7th May 1945.

It was obvious that the war was coming to a close and it was announced that Winston Churchill would speak to the nation at 3pm. Mr Frank Jowitt, who owned an electrical and radio shop on New Street, (where the Crest of the Wave chip shop now stands) set up a public address system at the end of his shop. Together with a fair sized crowd I remember sitting on my bike in the Co-op Square listening to this speech saying that hostilities would cease at midnight.

Word then spread that Smiths at Buckland Hollow (where the Excavator now is) had made some ice cream. A crowd of us cycled to Buckland Hollow and celebrated with the then rare pleasure of an ice cream.

I have no particular recollections of actual VE Day but I did go to a street party in Nuttalls Park some days later."

The Ripley Flax Factory

Another enquiry, from David Gray, concerned the Ripley Flax factory, or more correctly, the British Hemp and Flax Development Company Ltd, which opened a flax processing plant on Heage Road Ripley in 1939.

He recalls:

“I was brought up on a farm which, in the mid 1950s, grew flax.

When ripe, this crop was pulled rather than cut. There was a machine which used to arrive each year towed behind a tractor and which was supposed to pull the flax. Unfortunately, it never did work very well and we used to hire twelve Irishmen from the Salvation Army hostel in Nottingham. They used to go across the field on their hands and knees pulling the flax and were much more efficient than the machine. The flax was then sent to a site in Ripley where it went through a process called “retting” – literally, rotting away the fleshy part of the stem, leaving the fibres, which were then sent to Ireland for conversion to linen.



I well remember the huge water tanks in which this “retting” process took place.”

Frank Mansey, in his Guide, added that the fields near the processing plant were full of unprocessed flax, just like haystacks, and they were destroyed in a huge fire in April 1942. The firm was nationalised in August 1945 and the factory

closed in 1956, the site being redeveloped as part of RUDC’s Heage Road Industrial Estate in 1969.



Friday, 3rd September 1920

Finally, a look at the news from 100 years ago. You'd have to look hard, mind, in the weekly edition of the Ripley and Heanor News, to find anything of national importance. There was a short article on page 3 (of 4 pages) about oil; otherwise the whole paper was taken up with local issues.

Page 1, as always, was given over to adverts and notices of property for sale. The Empire got its programme on the front page, featuring "A Marriage for Convenience". There was also a prominent ad for Kay's Motor Trip the following Sunday (in their Daimler charabanc) to Haddon Hall, Monsal Dale, Chatsworth and Matlock.

On page 2 there were more ads, including a large one for the Hippodrome, which was presenting "Tommy Atkins in Berlin" with Chester Conklin. There were also a few births, marriages and deaths, and notices for coming events, as seen here.



Page 3 included the lengthy crime reports from the petty sessions, minor crimes like riding a bicycle without a light, or failing to pay maintenance to a wife. There were also detailed reports of the council meetings as well as the ad below for pianos and organs and the

"latest

models of Talking Machines", and a large ad for a play "Are You A Mason?" ("A farcical comedy in three acts") at the Victory Hall.

Finally, page 4 was mostly sports reports, with a few ads and the latest episode of the serial story. It really was a very different kind of journalism!

