

RIPLEY & DISTRICT
HERITAGE TRUST
DERBYSHIRE

Newsletter



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Letters from Botany Bay

Over two hundred years after the Pentrich Revolution, we know the facts, but it is rare to hear the words of these ordinary people.

Yet some do exist, like the six letters written by Josiah Godber to his wife Rebecca, which have miraculously survived. Godber had been sentenced to death for his part in the Rising, a sentence later commuted to 14 years' transportation to Australia.

He was older than most of the men, in his mid-fifties, literate and thoughtful, although a labourer. His first letter, in December 1817, was from a hulk, or prison ship. In it he assures his wife that he is well, and asks her to send clothes, money, scissors, razors, needles and his pocket knife. He hopes she will be able to "cross the ocean to follow me and if I can attain this, I shall be the happiest man in the world."

His second letter was from the transport ship "Tottenham". The ship had set off for New South Wales, but ran aground and had to be sailed back to Sheerness for repairs.

"Don't neglect writing", Josiah says to his wife, but his next letter is dated 18 months later, in July 1819, from Sydney. He has been allocated a job in a steam-engine powered mill run by a Mr Dickson, and counts himself lucky: "I am quite at home, only for the loss of you."

He thanks the gentlemen at home who had signed his "character", a testimonial partly responsible for the commutation of his sentence. He also gives news of



The "Retribution" hulk, by Christine Cummings

some of the other local men, and complains about the price of clothes, “as there are so few manufactories.”

In later letters he describes Sydney, and complains of the quality of the beer, wishing that his old master, James Fletcher of Ripley, a brewer, was in the colony, as his beer was far better.

Finally, after over four years, a letter arrived for Rebecca from his friend, George Brassington: Josiah died of dysentery in July 1823. George describes burying him, and even the wake he and the other Ripley men held for him, adding: “Oh, what I would give to be once more at Ripley.”

There is one final letter in the collection. It is a brusque note dated March 1824, to Rebecca Godber from her landlord William Kirkland. In it he demands twelve pounds a year rent, and gives her notice to quit if she cannot pay.

More on the Revolution, including the letters, can be found at:

<https://pentrichrevolution.org.uk/>

Butterley Revisited

BUTTERLEY REVISITED



**The Butterley
Company
1790 to 2009**

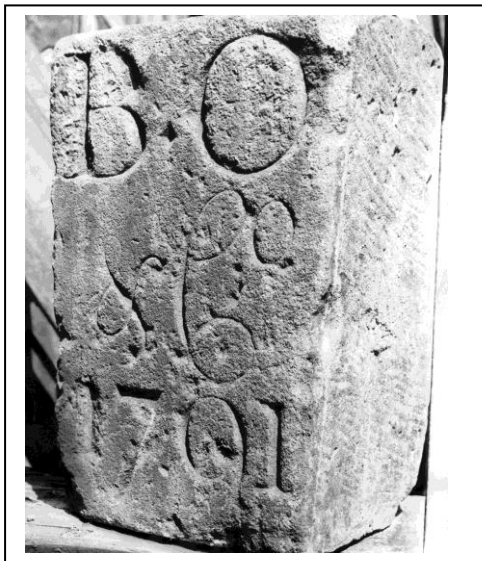
John Chambers, former Butterley apprentice, has written a book on his memories of working in the bridgeyard at the works.

John started work at Butterley “on Monday 13th April 1953 at the age of fourteen.... I was an indentured apprentice and my wages for a basic forty-four-and-a-half-hour week (which included working Saturday morning) were one pound, sixteen shillings (£1.80 today).” He relates many more memories in the book, and also lists all the people he remembers working with, describes the bridgeyard, and some of the jobs they did, looks at the 3 important Butterley constructions,

(you can probably guess which ones) and outlines the “Road to Ruin”, the series of takeovers and mergers that led to Butterley finally closing in 2009.

He gives his suggestion for preserving the history of the site, looks at the involvement of the Wright family in Butterley and tells the story, among other things, of the history of the datestone shown here, now in Ripley Town Council’s offices.

The book is being printed and a small number of copies will be available for sale soon.



“Owd Codnor” Project

RDHT is working with the U3A Local History Group on a project based on Joseph Millot Severn’s book “My Village: Owd Codnor”.

The book, which was published in 1935, is Severn’s memories of growing up in Codnor in the 1860s and 70s (he was born in 1860). It gives amazingly detailed accounts of the places and people he remembers.

The aim of the project is to show the people and their stories in a graphic form on a map and to create a picture of Codnor as it was 150 years ago. It is hoped that the project will result in a public display.

Below is an example of Severn's narrative.

FANNY JEPSON

Here, in Hockley Yard, lived another interesting character, old Fanny Jepson. She was a very simple-minded woman, a talkative, quiet grumbler, but good-natured and honest. She could not afford crinolines, and being tall and erect added to the comicality of her appearance beside other women in the sway of fashion; for quite poor people and girls in their teens then wore crinolines. My mother was a good needlewoman, and did a good deal of needlework and dressmaking, and as a boy I used to help her run the steels in the tucks of crinolines. Fanny and her husband, old Tom Butler, farm worker at Mr Stirland's, lived in the old stone house in Hockley Yard....

Census records confirm that Thomas Butler (b.1803) and his wife Fanny Butler (b1804) did live in Hockley Yard. He was an agricultural labourer and she was a framework knitter. In the 1881 and 1891 censuses, Fanny is living alone and is described as a pauper, Tom having died in 1877. Fanny, whose real name was Frances, lived to the age of 89, dying in 1892.

No trace of the house Severn describes remains today.

Ripley Street Names

Being a relatively young town, Ripley doesn't have a lot of intriguingly odd street names, like some towns with medieval centres.

The names of the old manors (Butterley, Padley) are represented, and there are a few like Street Lane which go back even further to Roman times, but most pre-twentieth century streets fall into a few common categories.

There are the directional (Cromford Road, Nottingham Road), the botanical (Pease Hill), the occupational (Pit Lane), the patriotic (Albert Street or Alma Street), streets named after their developers (Henry Street) and a few named after London streets (Oxford Street, Grosvenor Road).

There are also a few odd ones. Where does the name Weston Spot come from, for example? Or Chadwick Grove or Grave? Why is Leamington Street so called?

Any answers would be gratefully received.

Forthcoming Talks

In October we have a talk (advertised on the back page) from Ivan Brentnall of the Tibshelf Local History Society titled "Miners to Medics".

The next talk will be shared with Amber Valley Moviemakers and will be from Stephen Flinders entitled "My Kind of Paris". Details later.

Ripley and the Rajah

From the beginning, the Butterley Company exported their products all over the world, and especially to India.

Henry Jessop, son of the co-founder of the company, worked for both the Butterley Company and the East India Company and through him in 1815 the Nawab of Oudh ordered a steam engine from the Butterley Ironworks to work the fans (punkas) in his palace at Lucknow, costing £250 (in today's money, just under £20,000). It was probably India's first.

Before 1830 the Butterley Company had made over 150 engines for India.

The Nawab appears to have supported technology and also ordered the first steam vessel which sailed on Indian waters, a pleasure boat for the use of his son. It was 50ft long, 9ft wide with a depth of 4ft. The single cylinder engine was cast at the Butterley Ironworks in 1819 and powered the side paddles at 7-8 m.p.h.



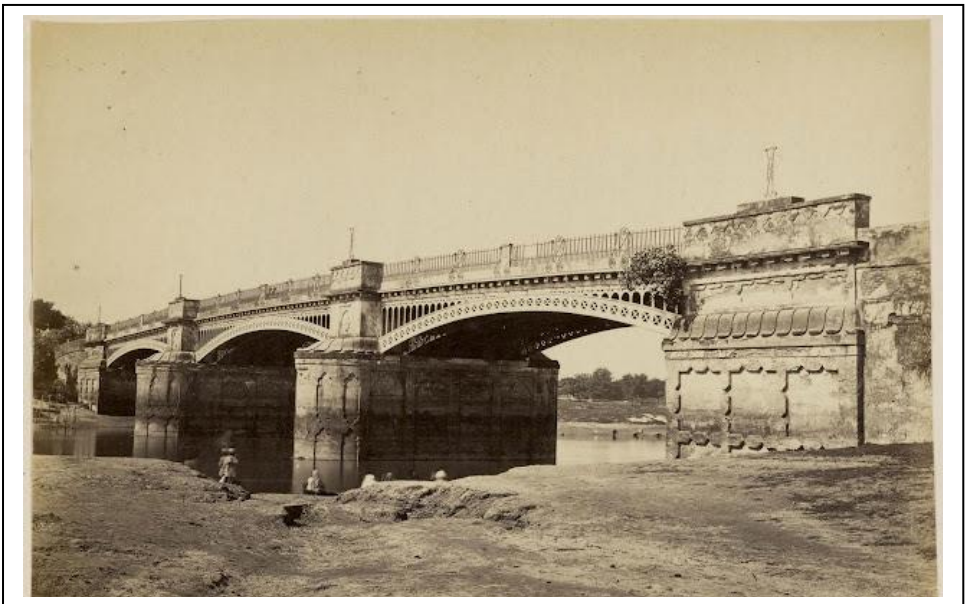
The Nawab of Oudh

Butterley was also responsible for the first cast-iron bridge in India, across the river Gompti in Lucknow, in 1815.

It was cast in 2,500 pieces and dispatched by canal and sailing ship around the Cape of Good Hope. Henry Jessop travelled to India to supervise its erection, but the Nawab had died before the bridge could be erected and the new Nawab found other jobs for him to do for 3 years, until he eventually returned home.

The bridge (seen below) was not erected until over 20 years later when another Nawab had come to power.

In 1820 Henry and his brother George also bought India's first engineering company, Breen and Co, founded in Calcutta in 1788, and renamed it Jessop and Co. The firm, no longer owned by Butterley, became a giant concern and lasted until a few years ago.



Thanks to Julie Webster for the original research on this topic.

Ripley and District Heritage Trust
present



MINERS TO MEDICS



**Tibshelf: Pioneers of
Medical Care 1860 – 1960**



on Tuesday October 24th at 7.30pm

At Marehay Miners Welfare, Derby Road, Ripley DE5 8JN.
Free admission, small donations welcome