

RIPLEY & DISTRICT
HERITAGE TRUST
DERBYSHIRE

Newsletter



Number **Twenty-Five**

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www.rdht.org.uk

Finally...Another Newsletter

It's been a long time since our last newsletter. A combination of post-Covid malaise, the lack of a meeting place (the "shed" was out of action for nearly a year) and family illness has meant that RDHT has been in limbo for a considerable while. So, welcome back.

BIT (Butterley Ironworks Trust) update

The three companies used to conduct BIT's feasibility study, namely Focus Consultants Ltd, Boon Architects and Imagemakers Ltd have now submitted their Final Executive Summary covering the Business Plan, Architectural Study and Interpretation Ideas.

A Completion Report is now being prepared for the NLHF (National Lottery) who made a significant contribution to fund the Feasibility Study.

Amber Valley BC and the owners Aquarius Estates are still in discussion about the Section 106 requirements for the Blast Furnace Wall (repairs and future maintenance), BIT is now considering the next step forward with special emphasis on increasing active membership, raising further funds e.g. for site information boards and other items such as further special events.

The Pattern Shop is now occupied by three companies covering an engineering consultancy, a bespoke bathroom designer and installer and a business specialising in tattoo removal. There is excellent free parking alongside the building.

Julie Webster continues to provide daily pieces of Butterley's past history on the BIT face book page. To read these fascinating facts, just Google 'Butterley Ironworks Facebook' for direct access - no login required, to join the large number of people already getting their daily dose of Julie's fascinating pieces of Company related information often dating back to 1790.

Tim Castledine.

Butterley Brick

New to our website is an article by Tom Denniford, Group Surveyor and Land Agent to the Butterley Company at the time of the takeover by the Wiles Group in 1968.



Production at Waingroves in 1963

The article outlines the history of Butterley's brickmaking activities from the company's foundation to 1984.

It is worth noting that Forterra, the firm now operating the local brickworks, use the brand name "Butterley" for a range of their heritage bricks.

The cover illustration shows part of the range of bricks that Butterley or its descendants once produced.

Butterley Revisited

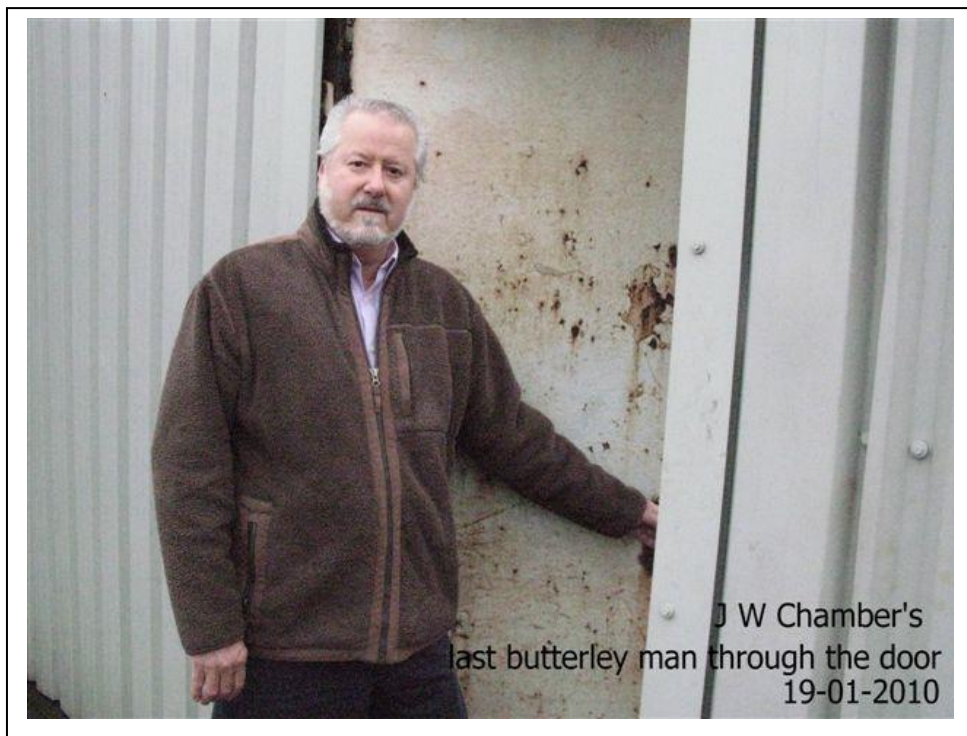
We are currently preparing for publication a book by John Chambers giving his memories of working at Butterley and his more recent encounters with the site.

We intend to produce a small number of copies initially. Though it might be of limited interest to the general public, the book will certainly rekindle memories for the many people who worked at Butterley over the years.

One of John's claims to fame is that he says he was the very last person to pass through the personal gate in the Bridgeyard wall. How does he know this? Well,

he and John Hardwick were on the site on the 19th January 2010 when the wall containing the door was demolished. Just before the crane moved in, John asked if he could go through the door one more time.

Hence the picture below!



St John's School Dig 2023

Derbyshire Scouts are once again going to be working with the pupils at St John's School to do small archaeological excavations in the summer.

We have agreed to help by providing historical advice and insurance cover.

The site was once a brickyard owned by George Watson. Born in Bleasby, Nottinghamshire, he seems to have come to Ripley in the 1850s and worked here from then until his death in 1901. He lived in Alfred Street, but the brickyard was

on land at the end of Dannah Street, including the land on which the school was subsequently built.

One of George Watson's bricks (from East Midlands Named Bricks blog)



Morgause Lomas writes:

Following the discovery of a complete 1920s Bovril bottle near the school playing field, the Year 6 pupils expressed an interest in finding out more about the history of the site of the school. The school had been given the impression that there had been a bottle dump on the site due to the amount of broken glass that kept appearing in the field.

Maps from the late 1800s showed that the school buildings were located on the site of the Watson Brickworks which closed in the first half of the 20th century

Derbyshire Scouts Archaeology Team (DSAT) was approached with a view to carrying out investigations of the area and this was carried out by excavating a series of 10 test pits by pupils from years 5 & 6 from the school, under the supervision of members of DSAT.

Within the top 20cm of each pit, large amount of broken glass, broken pottery, bone and metal, most of which appeared to date from between 1850 and 1950 was found.



Many of the bone finds appeared to have butchery marks, whilst the glass was a mix of bottle, window and drinking vessels. The metal consisted of indeterminate rusted metal, aluminium, toy parts, nails and wire.

Notable pottery finds were fragments of Clay Pipe, a

Burrows and Sturgess soft drinks bottle, Home Brewery beer bottle and a part of a Stoneware foot/bedwarmer that may have been manufactured in Denby.

Due to the mix of finds and periods it is possible that the site was 'landscaped' prior to the building of the school, possibly infilled with rubbish.

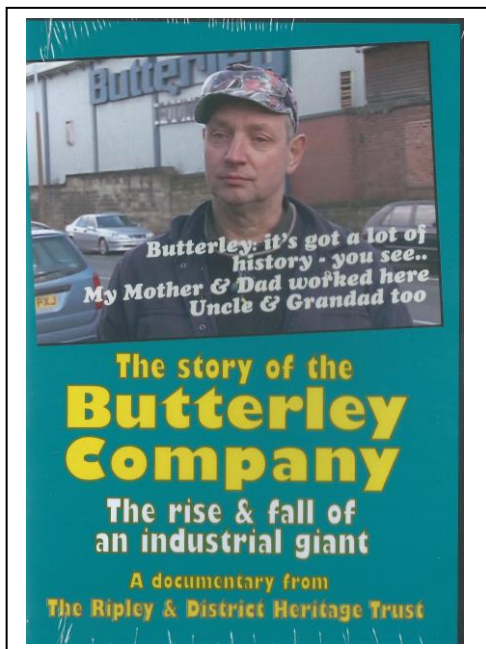
Further test pits are planned for this year with larger involvement from the school and also local Scouts. We are hoping to give over 200 young people the experience of an archaeological excavation. No evidence of the brickworks was found in this area but further research is required into the history of the site.

New on the Website

Added to the website (www.rdht.org.uk) since our last newsletter are articles on:

- ❖ Ripley Breweries
- ❖ Arthur King, cycle manufacturer and retailer
- ❖ Early ambulances in Ripley
- ❖ Jubilee celebrations in 1897
- ❖ Ripley Fair
- ❖ The Early days of Policing in Ripley
- ❖ Wilkinson Herbalist

Butterley Video goes on Youtube



Our Butterley DVD is now available, free of charge, on YouTube.

Just search for “Butterley Ironworks” .

The 40 minute DVD will remain available for those who prefer to have a physical copy.

“Voices” magazine articles

We continue to produce a monthly article for this free magazine. It's getting harder, though, to find new topics, so if you'd like to write an article, it should be about 300 words, with some pictures.

Articles can be submitted via the Contact Us page on the website or direct to me: pcs10033@gmail.com.

Meanwhile, in case you missed it, here is one of the more recent articles.

Go South, Young Man

In December 1897 the Derby Mercury published a series of articles entitled “What To Do With Our Boys”, addressing a perceived problem of too many

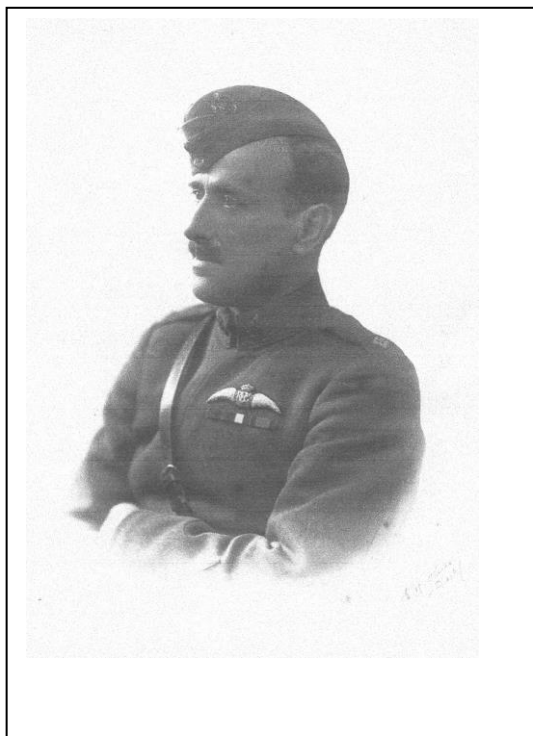
young men and too few opportunities for them. The main solution seemed to be emigration, and among those who left was one remarkable Ripley man.

Born in Waingroves in 1873, the son of a pit engine driver who later became the Waterworks Manager, Isaac Ottewell had set himself up as a painter and decorator, but in 1898 he made the 16-day journey to South Africa.

Soon after his arrival, in 1899, the second Boer War broke out, and he joined a local regiment the Colonial Scouts, later transferring to the Imperial Light Horse and then was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Johannesburg Mounted Rifles. He took part in many battles including the Relief of Mafeking.

After the war, he left decorating behind and became a mechanical engineer with his own firm, later owning a garage and apparently prospering.

In 1915, however, he returned to England and joined the Royal Flying Corps : it seems likely that he had had something to do with aircraft, or at least their engines, in South Africa. He deducted 8 years from his age in order to join up.



He did two years as an engine sergeant and then retrained as a pilot, becoming a Flying Officer in 1917 and full lieutenant and flying instructor in 1918. He was then posted to the Wireless Telephony Unit, a specialist group developing two-way radio for use in aircraft.

He survived the war, but in 1919, days before he was due to be demobbed, he was killed whilst flying as an observer in an Avro 504 which crashed near Bournemouth. He left a widow who later returned to South Africa.

His was a remarkable, adventurous life.