

## Members' E-mail Addresses

Sometimes we need to communicate with members more immediately than we can by this newsletter, for example to remind everyone of the next meeting. The computer can help us do this provided we have accurate e-mail addresses. Can you ensure you let us know if you get a new address, please? Contact our Membership Secretary Peter Marrison: [wpmarrison@btinternet.com](mailto:wpmarrison@btinternet.com). Thank you.

## The Railway which Served Dam Construction in the Upper Derwent

On 20<sup>th</sup> September Ted Hancock gave an excellent talk on the Bamford and Howden railway, built specifically to supply stone to build the Derwent and Howden dams.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the need for water to supply the towns of Derby, Leicester, Nottingham and Sheffield had become very apparent and the Upper Derwent valley was identified as a suitable site for reservoirs. Initially six reservoirs were contemplated but eventually the two which we now know as the Derwent and Howden reservoirs were selected. Construction of the Howden and Derwent Dams was begun in 1901 and 1902 and finished in 1912 and 1916 respectively. Because of earlier failures with earth-built dams such as the Dale Dyke in the Loxley valley, it was decided to build both dams of masonry. Accordingly, land deemed to have suitable reserves of millstone grit above Grindleford Railway Station was purchased. It merely needed a way of getting it the 7 or 8 miles to the planned construction site.



At the Bole Hill quarry, face stone was loaded into rail cars and winched down the 1 in 3 railway incline shown in the photo above and which it is still possible to see, although much overgrown. From the sidings at Grindleford station, stone was assembled into trainloads to be hauled along the main line to further sidings just beyond Bamford station. In order to create the link to the dam sites in the Upper Derwent

Valley, it was necessary to construct a 7 mile stretch of line: the Bamford to Howden railway to run along the western side of the river Derwent. The relatively steep 1 in 40 gradient of the track meant that the length of the trains carrying stone had to be kept fairly short and required many trips. For 14 years or so the line was used regularly and over its life transported more than a million tons of stone. Ted Hancock provided an absorbing photographic journey along this line which paid tribute to the engineering prowess involved.



Above is one of the rare photos we saw. This shows the splendid wood/metal/stone viaduct (looking a bit like rail bridges in early westerns) which took the railway across the Ashop River and the old Snake road (since submerged beneath Ladybower reservoir). The little village of Ashopton visible here also disappeared beneath the water.

We were shown photos of similar viaducts constructed to cross the Locker Brook beyond Fairholmes and another which spanned Ouzeldon Clough (where foundations and remains of the pitch pine trestles can still be seen at low water). The line of the old railway track is marked by the current road as it finally ended at the Howden dam construction site. At the time, branch tracks led down to the base of the dam.

As well as carrying stone, passenger trains took workers and their families to Bamford and brought in visitors for social events such as sports days and dances.

Although by today's standards the working conditions were extremely dangerous, the Derwent Valley Water Board was a good employer. It constructed the small township of Birchinlee for the regular work force and their families. With a population eventually approaching one thousand, that was locally known as 'Tin Town' because of its corrugated iron construction. It boasted a small hospital, school and police station.

Once the dams were completed in 1916, Birchinlee Village and the rail line were demolished, although the first section of the line from Bamford was relaid in 1935 for the building of the Ladybower reservoir. The path of the line can still be followed from Bamford (some of it now under Ladybower) with various remnants of the engineering works to be seen along the route. Bolehill quarry and the incline can still be visited and walked.

## Sheffield's Motor Car Pioneers

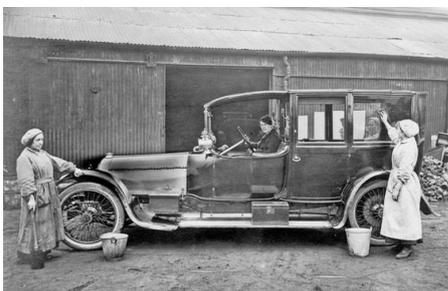
In October this year, Andrew Swift reminded us in his fascinating talk that early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Sheffield had expanded its expertise in engineering into the manufacture of motor vehicles. By 1920 the city had eight companies producing cars in varying volumes to meet the increasing demand as motor cars rapidly replaced horsepower.

At the outset, he pointed out that in 1900 the main road in Ranmoor was little different from today apart from having no cars on it. In those days there were over 10,000 working horses on major roads in Sheffield such as Ecclesall Road. But horses were then producing four tons of manure per mile per day! No wonder full time crossing sweepers were employed.

By the 1930s the number of horses had fallen to only a few hundred, with the result that the fields that had previously produced forage were now available to be built on.

The Sheffield companies that had introduced car manufacturing into their range had often been urged to do so by the entrepreneurial young turks of company owners' families. One such company, Cavendish based in Cavendish Street, started manufacturing and assembling vehicles in 1903. Although they had ceased production by 1912 they continued their connection with motor cars, and instead concentrated on car sales, eventually becoming Kennings.

La Plata Works of Burgon & Ball at Malin Bridge merely bought in the chassis and made the bodies to go on them. They also moved on to car retailing and general engineering. This was not uncommon as most car manufacture itself in Sheffield had ended by the mid-1920s, even though local companies continued to be major providers of steel to the motor industry in the Midlands.



Simplex was one of the best known Sheffield car manufacturers of this era. Its 50-horsepower model was said to be a worthy rival of Rolls Royce. It is estimated that the company made 1500 vehicles between 1907 and 1920, when production finished.

There are only three Simplex cars still in existence, one of which one can be seen today at the Kelham Island Museum.

The photo is of three women employees cleaning what is thought to be a new car at the Simplex Fitzwilliam Works in Tinsley. It is available on the *Picture Sheffield* website.

## Paying for the Vicar

In the absence of anything like a 'welfare state', Victorian residents of Sheffield were used to donating cash to pay for their hospitals, schools and other facilities. They also had to raise money to build and maintain their churches, but have you ever thought how they financed their local vicar?

From the time of its foundation in 1879, Ranmoor's St John's, followed a common procedure of the time, renting out seats in the church. Regular members of the congregation were asked to pay a yearly rent for a specified sitting in a particular pew. For St John's that was initially set at £1-10-0 (£1.50), and some 400 rented sittings were created for people known as "seat-holders". A few seat-holders paid for more than one pew. For instance, in 1899 Frederick Thorpe Mappin, creator and occupant of Thornbury, rented 14 seats in two separated pews, and three members of the Firth family rented 21 sittings in three different pews.

That left approximately 160 "free pews" for other people, perhaps those who could not afford to pay, were infrequent attenders, or were visiting from outside the area. Pew rents had to provide the vicar's stipend for more than 60 years.

By 1929, the church's booklet to celebrate 50 years of St John's reported that the Church Council "feel that there is no greater service they can render to the Church as a Jubilee thank-offering than to establish an endowment fund with a view to freeing the Church of God from Pew Rents. . . . [I]t is confidently expected that ultimately, by the aid of legacies and otherwise, the Endowment Fund may reach such dimensions that the Pew Rents may be abolished entirely." However, that only became possible after many years – in 1945. More recently, parishes have made payments into what is currently termed the Common Fund, and from that and other sources their diocese meets the cost of vicars' stipends and other commitments.

### Ranmoor Society Committee 2016

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