

HERITAGE NEWS

A newsletter of South Derbyshire District Council, Sharpe's Pottery & Swadlincote T.I.C

Issue 33

Autumn 2011

HERITAGE NEWS – over and out

We are sorry to announce, after 12 years of publication, that this will be the final issue of "Heritage News", as the Heritage Officer post is to be merged with the Conservation Officer role occupied until recently by Marilyn Hallard. It is hoped that the function of Heritage News can to some extent be continued as an informal and occasional internet blog on the SDDC website.

Marilyn took early retirement in August after 21 years of dedicated and effective service in the post. She will be particularly remembered for her work in the town centres of Melbourne and Swadlincote, and for her contributions to the careful re-use, repair and restoration of many notable historic buildings district wide.

Back copies of Heritage News will continue to remain available on the Council's website for the time being, and the District Council will maintain its active role in encouraging and enabling properties to open for Heritage Open Days each September. Through the Heritage Officer post, the District Council has researched and amassed a great deal of information on the district's heritage which will continue to be of use in its day to day work.

Thank you to all that have encouraged and supported this newsletter over its short but happy life. It has been fun to put together and I hope you have enjoyed receiving and reading it.

Philip Heath
August 2011

Heritage Open Days 2011

As usual, thousands of properties across the country are set to open their doors to visitors for the popular annual Heritage Open Days event. For full details, log on to www.heritageopendays.org.uk.



A bus trip around six of the South Derbyshire sites has been arranged for Saturday 10th September, courtesy of Terry Bushell Travel of Burton on Trent, who is kindly providing the service at cost. For tickets, which are £5 each, please contact Swadlincote Tourist Information Centre on 01283 222848.

The following are brief details of this year's openings in South Derbyshire:

Thursday 8th, Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September (no need to book)

Sealwood Cottage and Vineyard, Sealwood Lane, Linton, Swadlincote DE12 6PA.

10am to 4pm.

Remarkable gothic retreat of c1774 built by the Rev. Thomas Gresley of Netherseal, recently restored.

Thursday 8th, Friday 9th, Saturday 10th September

St Peter and St Paul's Catholic Church, 70 Newhall Road Swadlincote DE11 0BD.

10am to 4.30pm. (no need to book)

War Shrine dating from c.1850.

Church dating from 1958.

Exhibition in the church on the shrine, the history of the church and its effect on the community.

Quizzes for children, refreshments.

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Saturday 10th September

(no need to book)

Twyford: Church, Parish and People. Twyford Church DE73 7HJ. 10am to 4pm.

Local history exhibition in the charming Norman and Georgian Parish Church.

Calke Abbey DE73 7LE.

Grounds 11am to 5pm; house 12.30pm to 5pm, last admission 4.30pm.

Baroque house of the Harpur family with exceptional contents, 18th century landscaped park and gardens.

Sharpe's Pottery, West St, Swadlincote DE11 9DG. 10am to 3pm. Tours at 10am, 12noon and 2pm.

Victorian toilet factory, now a museum. Slideshow of artefacts normally hidden away in storage.

Saturday and Sunday 10th and 11th September
(booking required)

Grange Farm, Acresford Road, Overseal DE12 6HX.
Tours at 10am, 12 noon, 2pm and 4pm.

To book telephone 01283 227806
Georgian gentleman's farmhouse of high quality, rescued from the threat of demolition following subsidence.



Pictured right: Grange Farm at Overseal, probably built either by Joseph Wilkes or John Kettle, who were both wealthy cheesefactors in the 18th century. Far Right: Tree ring dating shows that the main part of Hartshorne Manor, or Upper Hall, is built of timber felled between 1618 and 1622.

Saturday and Sunday 10th and 11th September (no need to book)

Gresley Old Hall, Gresley Wood Road, Church Gresley DE11 9QW. 10am to 5pm.

A small country house built in various phases from the 1580s to c1710, former seat of the Alleyne family and converted to a Miners' Welfare in the 1950s. Interpretive boards tell the chequered history of the house, with a chance to view the collection of the South Derbys. Mining Preservation Group.

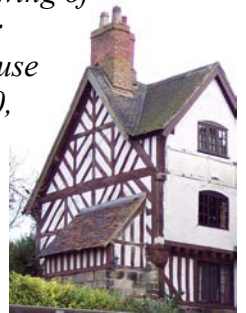
Swarkestone Old Hall, Old Hall Farm, Derby Road, Swarkestone DE73 7JB. 10am to 5pm.

Swarkestone Hall, a grand mansion of the Harpur family built c1560, was pulled down in the 1740s. This self-guided trail explores and explains the remaining features. The parish church will also be open, with

display material about the village in general. NB there is no access to any interiors except the church. **Repton Park, Red Lane, Repton DE65 6QP. 10am to 5pm.** Deserted parkland and remains of a seat of the Harpur Crewes of Calke, pulled down in a fit of rage in 1896. Interpretive panels tell the story.

Hartshorne Upper Hall, 10 Main Street DE11 7ES. 1.30pm to 5.30pm.

Hall and kitchen wing of impressive timber framed manor house built around 1620, with decorative framing.



FESTIVAL TIME AGAIN!

Festival Director Sharon Brown writes:

The Melbourne Festival offers the perfect opportunity to see the historic town of Melbourne at its best. During the Art and Architecture Trail on 17th and 18th September, 100 artists will be exhibiting in over 60 private houses, businesses and halls along an easy walking mapped trail through the heart of Melbourne.

A new addition this year is a special exhibition with Contemporary Artists at "The One Off", a design company in Derby Road. The converted old factory building has been refurbished, so make sure you stop and look! This year's Trail features many of the best artists from around the East Midlands.

The Festival aims to showcase the best of creative talents from within an hour's radius of Melbourne and include something to suit every taste (and pocket!). On the Trail this year look out for photographer Angelika Dennis and try painting with light, fine artist Justine Nettleton, and glassmaker Stevie Davies to name but a few!

For those visitors with restricted mobility there is an Easy Access Trail highlighting properties which can easily be visited. Children will be specially catered for with a special, safe area for young children at the Wesley Hall including an Art Exhibition showing work from the local schools and playgroups. There will be plenty to amuse them!

Don't miss refreshments and music on the Trail. This year there will be an extra vibrant splash of sound and colour courtesy of Bollywood dancers led by



A stylised view of Church Close and its surroundings by Barbara Bagley, an exhibitor at the Melbourne Festival

choreographer Nisha Nath of Surtal Arts, creating Melbourne's own Bollywood flash mob!

Melbourne Festival isn't just for the Creative Arts. The two week Festival of Performing Arts has become more adventurous and more successful each year. This year's programme runs from 10th -24th of September. The main programme starts with a gala concert on Saturday 10th by Melbourne's mixed voice choir "A Choir'd Taste", who got together following the Melbourne Festival's "Come & Sing" workshop two years ago. The Library Theatre Company are back with "Wind in the Willows" on Wednesday 15th; Nigel John takes to the stage on Saturday 17th with his amazing Elton John tribute act, and on Friday 23rd Melbourne will be resounding with the "Rhythm of the World".

For more information visit the Melbourne website www.melbournefestival.co.uk or call the Festival Office to request a leaflet.

Plaster Floors cont'd from page 3

buildings in our area. The Trent valley was the country's most important source of gypsum, with its main areas being around Tutbury, at Chellaston near Derby and across into south Nottinghamshire

In East Staffordshire, piles of brushwood (sometimes including a proportion of coal) were mixed with an equal quantity of rough gypsum in open-air fires. The heated gypsum could then be reduced to powder by thrashing, and was then sieved. The finer particles were used for wall and ceiling plaster, and the coarser ones were mixed with water for floors. Robert Plot describes this method in his Natural History of Staffordshire (1686). In his Agriculture and Minerals of Derbyshire Vol II (1813) John

Farey describes seeing the very same process at work several generations later in the main street of Stretton, Staffordshire, and roundly condemned it for its wastefulness. It gradually became more common to buy floor plaster that had been pre-prepared in calcining kilns, with less waste.

In other parts of Derbyshire, where gypsum was not so readily available, Farey tells us of other materials used to make similar floors. Around Brassington, the floors were made from waste spar from mine-hillocks, mixed with a small proportion of quick-lime and water. At Bonsall, lead slag was ground which, when mixed with calamine sand, was said to be "an excellent composition for Plaster floors". Around Matlock, plaster floors were made by

mixing small and refuse lime at the kilns with small quantities of sulphur from the lead cupolas, to which a little blood might be added. Around Alfreton, waste material from the Iron Furnaces would be mixed with magnesian lime, producing extremely hard floors.

Occasionally it is necessary to remove and renew these floors to the same formula, a recent case being the Blenheim House Hotel at Etwall, where severe timber decay in the attic floor structures made the work necessary. Historically, some of the old floor plaster would be burnt again and mixed with the new when a floor was being replaced, but this is no longer so easy now that we don't burn floor plaster in the street!

The 2011 Census



Helen Bralesford, Area Manager for the 2011 Census writes:

March 2011 was census time, and all households received a white envelope through the door, with a giant purple origami C emblazoned upon it. The census counts people and households in England and Wales and is carried out by the Office for National Statistics.

The census has changed over the years. The first 'modern' census, in 1801, asked just a handful of questions, like sex, occupation and families per house. Questions which have come and gone include whether people were deaf, dumb or blind (1851 – 1911) and duration of marriage. The latter only made it into one census, in 1911.

Tracking changes in society is an integral part of the census. Take toilets for example: censuses between 1951 and 1991 asked whether people had an outside WC. In 2001 the question focused on inside facilities. At the time, the answer to this question was used to measure deprivation, but when the 2001 results were published, it became obvious that the

housing stock in England and Wales was well serviced in the bathroom area.

The questions have evolved and now, with local authority funding very dependent on the results, the questions are designed to give the best planning information possible for the future. New questions for 2011 include, for example, the main language spoken and the type of central heating (which will help to assess the housing stock).

Meanwhile, previous census results give historians and family tree researchers valuable insight into how our ancestors lived. Millions of people watch shows like "Who do you think you are?" in which celebrities trace their family's lineage – using, among other things, census returns. While confidential personal information is never shared with anyone, "anonymised" census statistics (meaning that no individual can be identified) are used widely.

Many important decisions are based on census statistics. They allow comparisons to be made about

The 2011 Census continued from page 4



population, for example, to see where new housing needs to be built for first time buyers, or where new roads are needed because more people are commuting to work. The location of leisure centres, cinemas, schools, hospitals, even shops, are all shaped, in part, by census statistics.

Because a census counts every person and every household, the operation takes years of planning. Questionnaires were printed for all 25 million households in England and Wales and communal establishments like care homes, military

establishments and hospitals.

Unlike previous censuses, questionnaires to households were distributed by post, meaning that a massive address register had to be developed to include every household in the country. This was built using property lists from the Royal Mail and from the National Land and Property Gazetteer. Last summer, a team of address checkers set out across the country to make sure the register was accurate, by checking around 15 per cent of postcodes.



LISTED BUILDING DETAILS ON THE INTERNET

Until recently, getting a copy of the listing particulars and description of a listed building meant consulting a much-thumbed and dog-eared copy of the relevant listing volume at the local Council offices. Local authorities are required to update these by inserting amendments to the list as they are made, meaning that the listing volumes frequently contain deletions and inserted loose pages, adding to their scruffy image.

Two websites now enable members of the public to access listed building particulars easily. The first one, Images of England (www.imagesofengland.org.uk) is a project supported by English Heritage but is unofficial. It contains listing descriptions but is most useful as a photographic record (though incomplete) of the country's listed buildings. It is a valuable

resource but needs to be handled with care; in the case of South Derbyshire some of the photographs have been found to show the wrong buildings.

In April this year, however, English Heritage uploaded "The National Heritage List for England" onto the Internet. To access it, simply type the title into your search box. It is fully searchable and includes not only listed buildings but also other "heritage assets" including scheduled ancient monuments, shipwrecks, historic parks and gardens, and battlefields.

The National Heritage List for England is just one part of the

extensive heritage information available through English Heritage's Heritage Gateway accessible at www.heritagegateway.org.uk. It includes resources such as educational programmes and archaeological sites detailed in County Council based Historic Environment Records.

The List enables the public to have immediate access to up to date data on national designations at the touch of a button. You can nominate an asset for designation or ask for an entry on the List to be amended or deleted by using our online application form at www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/online-application-form

HERITAGE GATEWAY



Aston on Trent's New Heritage Centre

John Holloway of the Aston on Trent Local History Group writes:

In 2004, the Aston on Trent Local History Group was formed by village resident Carole Bagnall who called an open meeting, expecting 'one or two people to turn up'. When the doors closed on nearly thirty people she knew she had discovered a hidden interest within the community; a desire to learn and be involved in the development of its heritage.



The new Heritage Centre at Aston, alongside the lych gate and parish church.

Seven years on, the History Group is one of the largest social organisations in Aston with a regular attendance of 60+ people at the monthly meetings where guest speakers ply their trade of fascinating facts and films. From churches to cottage industry, civil wars to cursus, local history is firmly on the agenda and lapped up by those in attendance.

Significant funding over recent years has enabled the group to engage the community in discovering and recording its past. Donations and loans of documents, photographs and artefacts have swelled the Group's archives whilst volunteers busily log, annotate and file their heritage in a readily accessible format. An easily usable and professional website www.astonontrenthistory.org.uk offers a vast array of information and images, consistently achieving over 1500 monthly hits from around the globe.

Soon after the group was formed there were murmurings about the problem of where to store the increasing bulk of recorded history and make it accessible to visitors and the community. Bob Read, 45 years an Astonian and staunch member of the History Group, declared that a Heritage Centre was needed: a place to store, display, research and make available the vast amount of local history gleaned for and by the village. Enthusiasm reigned but with no funding and no premises it remained unfulfilled.

And then came a touch of serendipity. The Parochial Church Council of All Saints' owned a 1960s dilapidated flat roofed building in the church grounds that was literally crumbling away; years of damp and

lack of funding had rendered a much-used community building virtually unusable.

Spotting an opportunity, Bob suggested that the History Group form a working partnership with the PCC to restore the building and incorporate an integrated Heritage Centre; a community meeting and activity amenity with village history literally built in to the fabric. Users of the building would be surrounded by the backdrop of the history and heritage of Aston on Trent. And the building would be open on regular occasions by the History Group as a living museum in its own right; allowing the public access they had always sought. Planning permission was obtained to transform the building by re-facing it with more appropriate brickwork and replacing the flat roof with a pitched roof covered in plain clay tiles, to designs by local architect Philip Billham.

Six years down the line the aspiration has become reality. Six years of fundraising and grant seeking has transformed a semi-derelict building into a bright, warm and ambient venue, slotting into its conservation-area environment with oak beams and sympathetic brickwork. History displays adorn the walls, digital images beam out using modern technology and regular changing displays by local groups and organisations provide an informal and informative backdrop of local heritage.

The Heritage Centre formally opened on May 21st this year, the realisation of a big dream for a small history group and its dynamic volunteers.

SHARPE'S POTTERY KILN RESTORED

When the Sharpe's Pottery buildings were restored in 2002, the limited budget for the project was only sufficient to carry out localised repairs to the walls of the kiln, mostly carried out from a cherry picker. It was never expected that this work would make the kiln watertight, as it was never designed to be so, but it was hoped that the penetrating rainwater would be of manageable levels. However, in the years since opening, water ingress became increasingly severe and troublesome and it became clear that something more had to be done.

The brickwork of the kiln has therefore been comprehensively repaired at a cost of £80,000, funded by English Heritage, the District and County Councils, and Biffa (landfill operators). The patchy remains of render have been removed, damaged bricks have been replaced, the brickwork has been expertly cleaned and repointed, and the domed cap of the kiln has been re-rendered. Lead "secret" gutters have been formed where the adjacent roofs meet the kiln structure and a French drain has been installed at ground level. Projecting brickwork has been protected with lead.

It was not a straightforward exercise. A specially-engineered scaffold was needed to provide access to the curved structure both inside and out, and the poor weather in December 2010 caused a delay of about three weeks. The Sharpe's Pottery Museum needed to stay open during the course of the work, so temporary access corridors for the public had to be created through the space at ground and first floor levels.

The work was carried out by Midland Masonry (Powa Pak Restoration Specialists Ltd) from Bletchley, Market Drayton, Shropshire. It was supervised by conservation accredited architect Chris Hesketh, of CTD Architects in Leek, Staffordshire.

We need to wait for a torrential downpour to see whether this work will have the desired outcome, which is to make the kiln more useful for all-year round use.

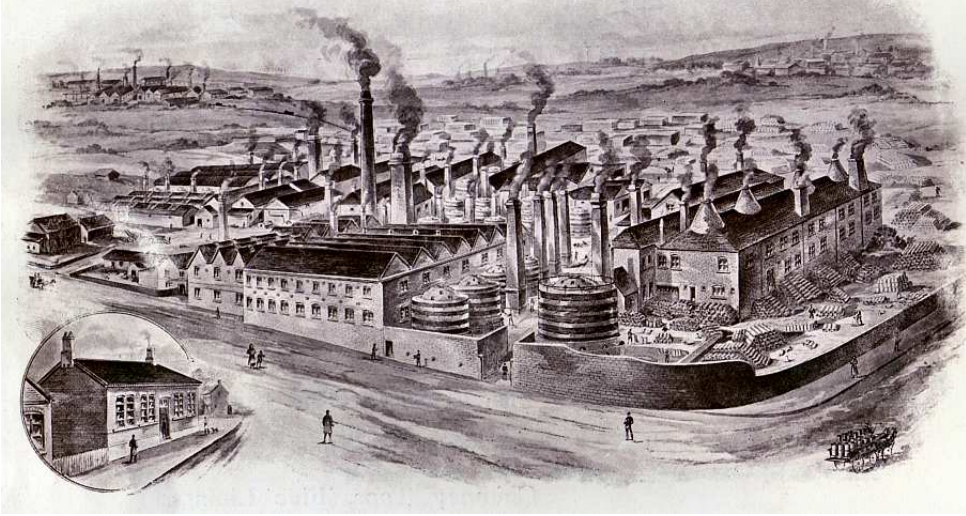
PS The editor had always assumed that Biffa was an acronym, but the company was established in 1919 by Richard Henry Biffa, who was engaged in the removal of ashes and clinker from the London power stations.

These residues were largely used in the construction industry and many of the World War II landing fields were built using clinker as a sub base. Clinker was also used to manufacture breeze blocks which were used at that time to build the internal walls of houses. They were the forerunners of Thermalite blocks. In 1960, Richard Biffa junior started up the company's Waste Management division and today Biffa Waste Services is one of the largest waste management and recycling groups in the UK.



OLD MEETS NEW AT NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

A bird's eye view of the Coppice Side pipeworks in their heyday, from an old sanitary pipe catalogue.



The remaining buildings of one of Swadlincote's most important pipeyards, on Coppice Side, have been lost in the middle of a redevelopment site since Hepworth's abandoned the works a few years ago, but are at last set to enjoy a rebirth. The site was founded as a firebrick works by John Hunt in 1790, diversifying into pipe making in 1859 under the ownership of James Woodward. It was further developed by the Wragg family after 1904 and was taken over by Hepworth's in 1978.

Swadlincote was a world leader in the manufacture of salt-glazed sewage pipes, and they were exported worldwide. They were humble but indestructible, and prior to the age of concrete and plastic pipes they were an essential part of public health reform.

Demolition of the northern part of the site, including the last remaining 'beehive' kiln in the area, was followed by the construction of the new Morrisons store. Demolition of the southern part has followed more recently, to make way for the retail, leisure, cinema, food and drink development now under construction by Rokeby developments, and to be known appropriately as the Pipeworks.

The historic buildings that still remain across the middle of the site have been repaired to a high standard by Bonsers of Kirklington, (Notts) and are still complete enough to show something of the character of a pipeworks, albeit dramatically sanitised without the smell, dirt, noise, heat and hardworked employees that were as essential to their character as the buildings.

They complement the modern building (designed by

Benoy Architects) very well, producing a vibrant and interesting townscape and showing that new and old can be an enhancement to each other. They have also preserved something of the sense of place and local identity so often lacking in modern retail parks, creating an environment which is refreshingly different.

The retained historic buildings comprise several separate elements. To the south west is a block of building comprising the

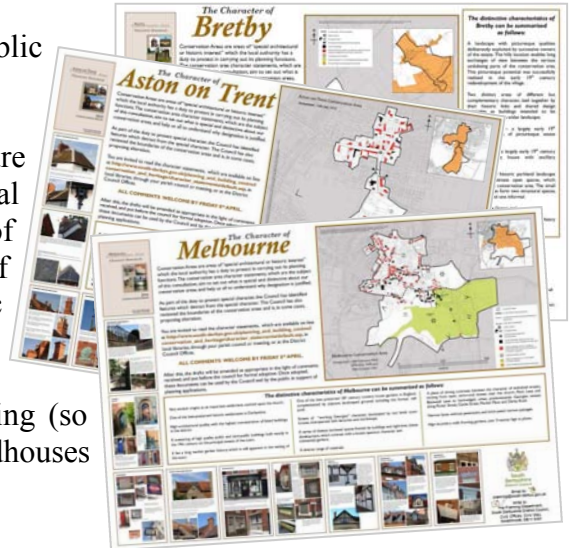
remains of the works extension, probably of the 1890s, built for the manufacture of glazed bricks and sinks. The north western part of this block is a remnant of the "drying hovels", with four parallel gabled roofs. Detached buildings to the north east comprise the fitting shop and the joiners and blacksmiths shops, attached to the large landmark chimney probably built c1905. On the east boundary of the site is the stores and office building, lined internally with glazed bricks. There were glazed bricks everywhere; even the Wragg family vault at Bretby church is said to be lined with them, so the family were not parted from their own products even by death!



CONSERVATION AREAS CONSULTATION

In February and March 2011 the District Council consulted the public over a series of conservation area character appraisals.

Conservation Areas of the built type, in contrast to nature conservation areas, are legally defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. The idea of conservation areas was formally introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967, and 22 have been designated in South Derbyshire since then, starting with Trusley (1968), Kings Newton (1969), Melbourne (1969) and Repton (1969), and ending (so far) with Swadlincote (1990), Walton on Trent (1992), Woodhouses (1992) and the Trent and Mersey Canal (1994).



Early designations were usually made on the strength of a boundary marked on a map, accompanied by a short committee report outlining the qualities of the area and recommending that it be designated as a conservation area. Appended descriptive or analytical material was usually scanty and tended to concentrate more on the history than the current physical appearance.

Since then, the advice of government and English Heritage has been aimed at ensuring a better public appreciation of why conservation areas exist and what designation means. In line with that advice, the District Council has produced character statements for all 22 of its conservation areas, and in February and March this year consulted the public over the first eleven of them (letters A-R). A similar consultation will be undertaken on the remaining eleven.

Conservation Area designation does not exist to stop development, although the appraisal process may well identify sites within conservation areas as being inappropriate for development, and there is a general presumption in favour of preserving historic buildings. The overarching aim is to ensure that when development takes place it respects and reinforces the established historic character and materials of the place in question.

Curiosity Corner

The Derby Hills Dam



The dam at Derby Hills, photographed on one of its rare emergences from under the water

On rare occasions, when the water level of the Staunton Harold Reservoir sinks low enough, a dam built across one of the arms of the reservoir comes back into view.

It occupies land that was once part of Derby Hills, a small parish which ceased to exist under the provisions of the South Derbyshire (Parishes) Order 1983, when its land area was divided between the parishes of Melbourne and Ticknall.

Before the reservoir was built, the old dam hardly attracted any attention. It no longer retained any water, and its clothing of grass and trees made it blend unnoticed into the landscape. However, against the scoured, bare landscape of the partially drained reservoir it is a conspicuous feature, raising comment over what it was for.

Derby Hills was originally a

Crown woodland. A family of carpenters and joiners called the Heywoods once lived there, on a spot called Broadstone, where they produced items of all sizes from individual pieces of furniture to large scale timber frames for buildings. After the woods were cut down the area was used as common land, providing rough grazing for the neighbouring parishes. In 1633 Derby Hills was bought by Sir John Coke of Melbourne Hall, who decided to fence it off in the hope of making it more profitable.

Near his house at Melbourne Hall, Sir John had bought a watermill by Melbourne Pool, standing next to the Earl of Huntingdon's watermill there

which still survives. Both mills were powered by Melbourne Pool, which was the property of the Earl of Huntingdon. Despite its large surface area, the Pool sometimes had an insufficient capacity to provide enough water to meet the demands of the mills.

The Earl of Huntingdon appears to have thought it unreasonable that Sir John's mill drew its supply from his own hard-pressed pool, and this was one of several disagreements between the two men. When the Earl rebuilt his mill around 1632, he appears to have 'accidentally' cut off the water supply to Sir John's mill, leaving it without power.

The solution, in 1634-6, was to remove the whole mill to Derby Hills, where Sir John was the sole landowner and controlled the water supply.

A site was chosen by Mr. Howett the engineer and millwright, the dam

was built, and the mill was set working there. The costs of the work, up to January 1637, amounted to £76 6s 2d, which was actually a substantial cost at the time, especially as the work involved just moving a mill and not making a new one. The mill was let for £8, with a hope that the rent could be advanced in the future.

But still there were problems. Various people claimed legal rights to depasture their animals on Derby Hills, and claimed that the mill pond occupied land that should properly be available for grazing. So in 1640, when a passing band of soldiers were bribed to do mischief in the area, one of their misdeeds was to dig down the new mill dam, and set fire to the mill itself.

The mill was set going again, but did not have a long life. By 1703 there was talk of removing the millstones from it for use at Melbourne Mill, and after this the mill is never

heard of again.

The useful life of the dam appears to have outlived that of the mill. In the middle of the 18th century, pools on Derby Hills were used to store a supplementary head of water for the iron furnace further downstream in the parish of Melbourne, which operated from the 1720s to 1772 and was excavated in the 1950s. It seems virtually certain that the old mill dam on Derby Hills was one of these pools. Oddly, however, the dam is not shown on the plans of Derby Hills made in 1723 and 1771, both of which must have been made during periods when the dam was redundant and empty of water.

Next time the dam emerges from the water, it will no doubt renew speculation about its purpose. At its simplest it is just an ordinary mill dam, but it isn't every dam that has such an interesting story to tell.

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Note:
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