

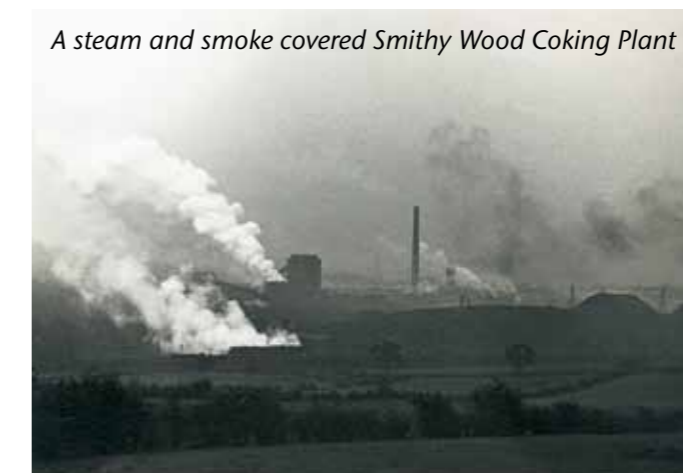
Discover Ecclesfield's Working Past



5. SMITHY WOOD COKING PLANT

Often cloaked in smoke and steam, Smithy Wood Coking Plant, between Ecclesfield and Chapeltown, was a vital part of the Newton Chambers enterprise. Here from 1929 coal was converted into coke for the blast furnaces, and as a by-product, oil was extracted for the production of Izal disinfectant. The plant consisted of 59 coke ovens of the most modern type when installed by Woodall- Duckham. Newton Chambers supplied all the constructional ironwork for the erection of the plant.

A steam and smoke covered Smithy Wood Coking Plant



The plant was designed to produce coke oven gas for Sheffield Gas Company, together with 5,800 tons of coke, 100 tons of ammonium sulphate, 68,000 gallons of tar and 29,600 gallons of crude benzole every week. Its operation was continuous and an oven was discharged and re-charged every 20 minutes. It was linked to collieries and the ironworks by an over-head rope-way system. It was nationalised at the end of 1946 and closed in the mid-1980s. It was demolished in 1987. The site today, looking remarkably green, is occupied by the newly-completed Smithy Wood Office & Business Park.



Apprentices and staff at Hall & Pickles Tool Engineering Dept, 1956

Many people will remember their trade mark – a line drawing of a striding man rolling up his sleeves, known as the 'go to it' Hydra Man. The Hall & Pickles Works has now gone completely and the site is the Hydra Business Park.

Open day in the Wire Mill at Hall & Pickles



Steam hammer at Hall & Pickles



In 1942/43 Rollem's began to develop the site. The firm was started by Joseph Mellor and Rollem is simply his surname in reverse. The firm manufactures bespoke print finishing machinery. Rollem Patent Products Ltd have recently relocated and the site is to be developed as an Aldi supermarket.

4. HALL & PICKLES HYDRA STEEL WORKS

Hall & Pickles were a firm of metal merchants and iron stockholders established in Manchester in 1812. In 1914 they opened branch premises in central Sheffield to produce crucible steel. In 1931 they bought what was then a greenfield site on Nether Lane in Ecclesfield and built their Hydra Steel Works. At the Hydra Works they installed an electric high-frequency induction furnace, a forge, a wire mill, a machine shop, laboratories and offices. Among their products were heat-resisting and stainless steels, electrical resistance wire and high-quality engineers' cutting tools.

3. THE UPPER CORN MILL

It appears that a corn mill had been constructed on this site by the early 1600s. The dam for the water-powered mill was supplied with water from the stream from Whitley, the tail goit of the Paper Mill dam and a small stream coming from the direction of Cowley. Little remains of the buildings on the site apart from an old stone building at the junction of the Common and Mill Lane (formerly Dog Leg Lane).



Corn grinding

Among local families who leased the mill were the Shirtcliffes between 1604 and 1624, William Dykenson in 1624 and Edward Wingfield between 1630 and 1637. Millers have included William Booth who died in 1791 and Charles Schargill who died in 1817. Local directories show that Joseph Hoyland was miller in 1849, Edmund Green in 1852, William Vickers in 1868 and Abraham Windle in 1879. The last miller was William Littlewood who worked the mill from 1893 until 1924. By the 1930s the dam was silting up.

Smithy Wood Coking Plant



DISCOVER ECCLESFIELD'S WORKING PAST

Until relatively recently, the village of Ecclesfield, now part of Sheffield's northern suburbs, relied on the exploitation of the physical resources within its parish boundaries: the land, the woods, the stone, the coal, the iron and the power generated from its small streams and brooks. These gave rise at an early date not only to farming, quarrying and woodland crafts but also to a tradition of light metal trades, and later to foundry work, engineering and coke and chemicals production.

This, the second of three leaflets, together with an accompanying information board, is designed to describe and explain the working past of the area from Whitley to Smithy Wood.

For bus times to Ecclesfield contact South Yorkshire PTE Traveline 01709 515151 or find timetables online at www.travelsouthyorkshire.com

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CORN, PAPER, METAL AND COKE

For centuries, outside the village core, industry occupied water-powered sites and later the large areas of flatter land in the eastern part of the parish. Light metal working trades were important together with corn milling and papermaking. In more recent times engineering operations and large-scale coke production prospered.

This leaflet is one of three published by Ecclesfield Conservation Group to reveal Ecclesfield's industrial past. This one covers the area from Whitley down the valley to the north-western end of the Common and then northwards to Smithy Wood.

1. SCYTHE MAKING AT WHITLEY HALL



Whitley Hall

In 1487 a new owner moved into a house, called *Launderhouse*, on the site of the present Whitley Hall. His name was Thomas Parker. Thomas was the son of John Parker, a scythemaker, of Norton. Whether he built a new set of workshops, and constructed a dam to power the water-wheel where none had existed before or whether he was taking over an already existing water-powered site may never be known.

Thomas Parker's will of 1510 reflects his trade of scythemaking. He left to his son John his waterwheel at Whitley, two grindstones, a stithy (anvil), bellows and troughs called coltroughs. Coltroughs were stone troughs full of water in which a smith plunged red hot iron to cool it.



Coltrough

In a court roll entry of 1587, even though the house was now surrounded by gardens and orchards, there were still two water-powered industrial buildings – a smelting house and a corn mill. Altogether six generations of the Parkers were associated with *Launderhouse* and its successor, Whitley Hall, spanning a period of 135 years. The house and grounds were surrendered to the Shirecliffes in 1622 and over the next three centuries Whitley Hall was used as a country residence. The water-wheel disappeared and although the dams survived they eventually became part of the landscaped grounds.

But even though industry disappeared from Whitley Hall at an early date, many of the inhabitants in the rest of the Whitley valley long continued to earn their living from industrial activity. In 1841, for example, of the 78 men and boys in employment there, only 20 worked on the land while 31 were engaged in small metal trades in workshops attached to their cottages – eleven file makers, ten nailmakers, nine forkmakers and one cutlery handle maker.

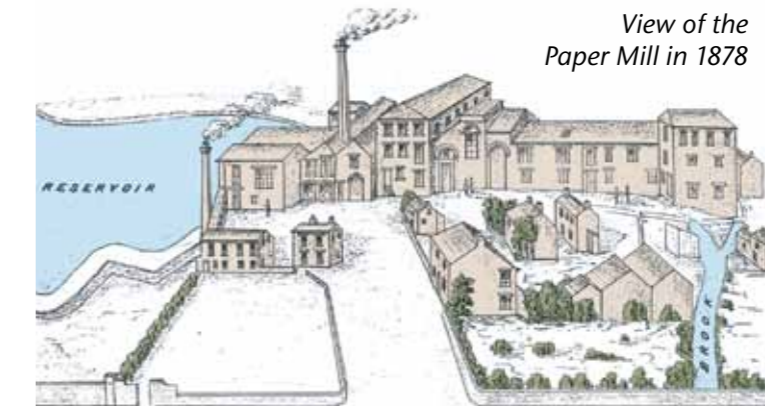
2. THE PAPER MILL

Paper Mill dam



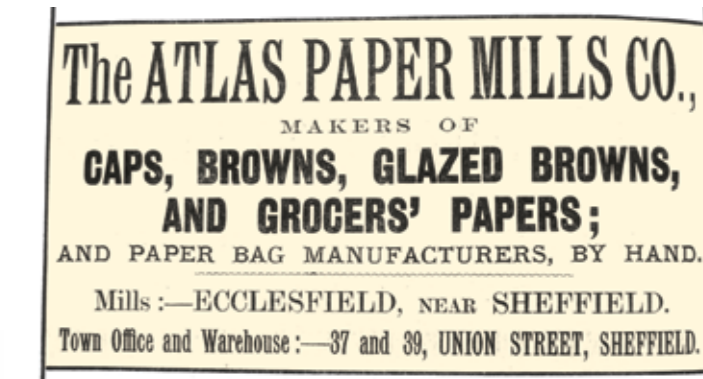
The site of this mill is partly occupied by the premises of the old Working Men's Club and the large reservoir that is now used by anglers was the dam that supplied the water for its water-wheel. Even before Ecclesfield Priory was built in the late 13th century it is believed that the monks of St Wandrille already had a corn mill in or near the village and the site later occupied by the Paper Mill is the most likely location for this ancient corn mill. It was still operating as a monastic corn mill in 1440 when John Grubb was fined twelve pence for diverting water from it 'to the detriment of the monks'.

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s, the mill still operated as a corn mill and continued to do so into the 17th century when it was mentioned in a survey of 1637 as 'a water Corne mill ... on ye west end of Ecclesfield moore'. When it changed function for the first time is not known but by 1794 it was a cotton mill and by 1833 it appears to have been used by Thomas Yeardley, flax spinner and thread and rope manufacturer. A sale plan of 1848 stated that it was Ecclesfield Paper Mill, formerly Ecclesfield Flax Mill.



View of the Paper Mill in 1878

By 1850 it was owned by John Gladwin, papermaker of Damflask, but from 1852 until records stop in 1907 it was managed by members of the Allen family. It was sometimes referred to as the Atlas Paper Mill and later as the Hallamshire Paper Mill. Initially the mill produced pasteboard and millboard (used in bookbinding). By the early 1860s the machinery was driven by steam power as well as water power. As part of the Children's Employment Commission (1865) young workers were interviewed. One young girl, Mary Madin, aged 12, employed at the Paper Mill, worked from 7.30 a.m. until 9 p.m. with an hour for dinner. She said "I catch paper at the cutter. A big girl passes the paper into the rollers at the other end." At that time the mill employed 17 males and 17 females.



Among later paper products made at the mill were 'browns' (unbleached paper used in packing), cartridge paper, coloured and glazed paper, paper bags and even paper neckties and scarves. These were said in an advertisement to be available 'printed in new patterns and fast colours in designs after the prevailing styles of woven fabrics.' The business carried on until 1907 but the premises burnt down in 1915.



LOCATION MAP BASED ON THE 1901 OS MAP