



LIBRARY NEWS 2025

JANUARY - MARCH

OPENING HOURS

Jan 8th 1.30 - 3.30

Jan 25th Library **CLOSED** (DAD Day Chesterfield)

Feb 12th 1.30 - 3.30

Feb 22nd 10 -12 & 1pm before the **Joan D'Arcy Lecture at 2pm**

March 12th 1.30 - 3.30

March 29th 10 -12 **Talk at 11am**

WEBSITE

The newsletter can also be found on the website on the library page along with all the library information and the search facility for the catalogue. All books new to the Library are on the catalogue and suggestions are always welcome.

A SELECTION of BOOKS NEW to the LIBRARY

Silk Threads and Ironworks

Anne M Powers Quandary Press 2024. 84pp

This book sheds light on the family of Wrights, contemporaries of, but unrelated to, the more famous Joseph Wright of Derby and who in their own way did almost as much for industrial Derby as the artist did for cultural Derby. Coming from Sutton in Ashfield in the 1760s as silk framework knitters, eventually ex-

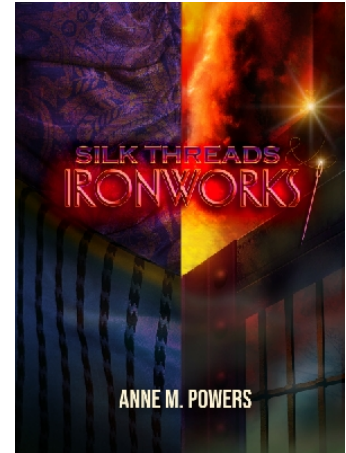
panding into mill ownership and the wholesale hosiery business, the Wrights businesses continued to grow, also being the joint founders of the Britannia Foundry later bought by Andrew Handyside who had met the Wrights in St Petersburg.

Together with offices and businesses in London and international trading, inter-marriage with other prominent industrial families in Derby al-

lowed the family to make an important contribution to the industrial and civic life of Derby. It is good to see the lives of families now perhaps lesser-known than in their own time being given a new lease of life.

Belper Voices Life in Belper in the Nineteenth Century vol 2. Christopher Charlton, Bernard Holden, Adrian Farmer, David Hool. The Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Educational Trust 2024. 186pp

This second volume, like the first volume, is of interest whether you come from Belper or not. By concentrating on the administrative work of the Pym family the writers show how a town like Belper, growing fast as the industry developed, coped with the huge demands of dealing with necessities of looking after the working population and how they were providing essential services against a backdrop of social and political change. There is so much to read, and interspersed with newspaper articles from the



time, this volume gives a fascinating picture of a new industrial town in the nineteenth century.

(Just an extra. Following on from the articles on Bells In Derbyshire in the last edition there is a short account about the raising of the Bell in St Peters church in Belper.)

The Demolition of Derby

Derek Palmer Derby's Heritage pub.
Richard Felix 1997 108pp

This is by no means a new book but it has real link to the collective memory of Derby. As a collection of photographs of buildings demolished in Derby, Derek Palmer who died in 2019, wrote the book "to remind people of what was demolished and some of the buildings we could have saved with a little thought". No place is immune to demolition but the need for development often overrides the historic and sometimes emotional attachments to buildings, particularly in the Post-war period but as he pointed out some were demolished in the 1930s. Derek Palmer worked for the demolition company but recognised the value of just what was being destroyed. There are a considerable number of pictures of St Alkmund's Church. The book ends on a positive note with pictures of buildings preserved rather than destroyed.

The two following articles arose from acquisitions to the Library.

Richard Finch's article on T H Thorpe came about when a few early journal were passed on to us. Inscribed on the front of one of them was the name Thorpe, Architect, St James Street, Derby. This looked like a person worth

investigating and Richard has kindly delved into the archives to find out more about this local architect. You will see from reading his article what a range of work he produced. There may be one his buildings near you!

Trevor Griffin's article arose from a drawing which peaked his interest in the collection of drawings of the Cromford & High Peak Railway recently acquired

A versatile Derby architect

Browsing the variety of architectural guides and town histories in the Society's Library to work out how the appearance of Derby and Derbyshire towns has evolved over the last 150 years or so certain architects' names keep coming up. H I Stevens, Percy Currey and others are well known; T H Thorpe, Thomas Harrison Thorpe 1871 – 1957, rather less so. He was born, brought up and trained in Derby being recorded in the 1891 census as an architect's clerk, and by 1904 Kelly's Directory lists him as a partner in Wright & Thorpe, architects and surveyors at 23 St James Street, Derby. He continued to work from this address with different partners until World War II.

The variety of his work is remarkable. He was in on the beginnings of the cinema age, converting the 1863 Alexandra Ice Rink on the corner of Normanton Road and Harrington Street Derby in to the Alexandra Electric Theatre in 1913. This was followed by the Whitehall Picture Theatre 1914 in St Peter's Street, later the site of British Home Stores. An-

other much later conversion in 1934 was the transformation of the Congregational Chapel on the corner of London Road and Traffic Street in to the Coliseum Cinema. Also in the 1930s he designed the Alvaston Cinema.

He undertook a variety of commercial and civic work, including the 1915 westward extension to the Museum on The Wardwick, an isolation block for the Derbyshire Royal Infirmary 1925, the 1923 Westminster Bank branch on Midland Road Derby, and again for the Westminster Bank an extension to the Matlock Bank branch 1935.

A lot of work was done on modernising pubs in the 1920 and '30s, particularly the mock Tudor style road houses that appeared on main roads. Thorpe's work on pubs included the rebuilding of the Nag's Head on Uttoxeter Road Mickleover in 1928 for Offilers brewery, also in a similar style the Mitre on Osma-ston Road for the Zachary Smith brewery in 1930, and alterations and extensions to the Green Dragon Willington for Strettons 1935.



1 The Nag's Head, Mickleover 1928. [Richard Finch]

Thorpe does not seem to have done much ecclesiastical work. The only instances I have been able to trace are the reconstruction of Brailsford Rectory 1925 and a new vestry for St Giles, Great Longstone 1937-8.

He was retained by Repton School to undertake the modernisation of boarding houses in the 1930s, the Orchard and Brook House in 1935, and the building of a handsome Georgian style new boarding house, The Mitre off Burton Road Repton, 1936-7. He also worked on the new buildings for Lady Manners School Bakewell 1936 for the Derbyshire County architect.

Thorpe seems to have remained active until the Second World War. His work was in many ways typical of practical professionals who seem not to have aspired to a style of their own but simply went along with clients' requirements and the context of the site to be worked on.

The practice continued as T H Thorpe & Partners in to the early 1980s, moving to 41 Friar Gate Derby, now Pickford's House Museum, and continuing the variety of work now including many church projects (All Saints Mickleover for example vestry and north aisle 1965-7), extensions to Buxton Hospital 1948, reconstruction of The Grange Littleover as a masonic hall 1971, the Heritage Gate Derby office block 1971-73.



2 The Mitre boarding house Repton School 1936-7 [Richard Finch]

Sources from the Society's Library used for this brief overview of Thorpe's work include:

Maxwell CRAVEN: Inns and taverns of Derby 1992

Maxwell CRAVEN: Derby: an illustrated history 1988

Derby City conservation areas [1998]

FRANKLIN, Ashley: A cinema near you 1996

HARTWELL C, PEVSNER N & WILLIAMSON, E: Derbyshire 2016

Some thoughts on the passenger carriage on the C&HPR

The recent acquisition by the Society of original early engineering drawings of the Cromford and High Peak Railway has, among other things, given clues as to solving the mystery of what its earliest horse drawn passenger carriage looked like.

Passenger operation by German Wheatcroft commenced in 1833. From

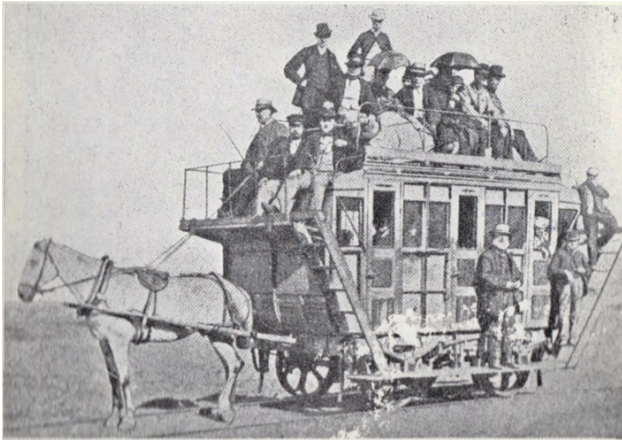
an account of an accident that year it seems as if the "carriage" was an ordinary wagon fitted with seats. The drawing now discovered shows a "break for passenger carriage" (sic). It is dated 1844 and shows a brake mechanism to work brake blocks on two wheels. The wheels scale to about 2ft 6in diameter and the distance between the two axles is about 4ft 4in. The height of the vehicle underframe is about 2ft 4in above rail level.

It has been reported that the C&HP Railway began its own passenger operation in 1854. The horse-drawn carriage was described in that year as having accommodation for about 16 inside and 14 outside passengers and having two "powerful breaks" operated by the "conductor". A report of 1856 lists one passenger carriage as part of the rolling stock. The service later only operated between Steeplehouse and Ladmanlow, because passengers had to walk up and down the inclines. From 1858 the "carriage" was replaced by a "fly", i.e. a brake van with passenger accommodation.

The drawing may show the braking arrangement which was essential to maintain safety. The 1844 date may be because the service started earlier than the first known report made ten years later

Based on the above and the dimensions shown on the drawing of the brakes for the carriage, I suspect it must have been very much like the contemporary horse drawn passenger vehicles used on the Swansea and Mumbles Railway (see pic-

ture below) which also had just four wheels close together.. It would have to be low so that the outside passengers could pass under bridges and through tunnels although clearances were relatively generous. The vehicle may have had a seat for the driver at both ends to facilitate reversal.



Relevant Books in the Library

Alan RIMMER *The Cromford & High Peak Railway* 1962

John MARSHALL *The Cromford & High Peak Railway* Rev. edition 2011

David HODGKINS (ed.) *The Records of the Cromford & High Peak Railway* 2008

“The views expressed in the articles are entirely those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Society”

JOURNALS RECENTLY ARRIVED

Archaeologia Aeliana 2024

Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society 2024

Midland History Vol 49 (3)2024

Society of Antiquaries of Scotland 2024

Surrey Archaeological Collection 2024

Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine 2024

And Finally

Michael Lobb of MSDS Marine at Holbrook has let us know that the Derby Labour Society Library is now in their keeping in the company library at Holbrook. Further details will be made available when we have them.



