

# TACS Gazetteer News

February 2001

Issue 9

## Work on the move!

Difficulties on the railways have had some interesting side-effects on the progress of the Gazetteer. No problem working on the train, with my trusty mini-computer, but instead of forging ahead with writing up the counties, the best sort of task for train journeys tends to be more mundane—listing collections of transparencies, beginning the glossary and the biographical directory, the type of job where one isn't always wanting to consult reference books (think I could do with a travelling library...). So although we've been making good progress, despite floods etc etc, the Gazometer—which just shows work on the counties, not the introductory material, the glossary and so forth—has not risen as much as one might have hoped. I'm looking forward to some spring sunshine for lots of site visits!

I hope you like the new look to the TACS website; the opening page was becoming so full with links to other (exciting!) pages that it needed a little sorting out, as it were, and now the site pages are split into those about TACS, the 'What's New' area, pages for those new to tiles, and pages on sites and manufacturers, including the entire site database and a new section on the Tile File, rescued from computerised obscurity by Peter Clegg. If you haven't seen the website yet, check out the Tile File pages—perhaps you could add some information on artists, manufacturers or designers?

Lynn Pearson, Gazetteer Editor

## WONDERFUL WEST BROMWICH And other new finds....

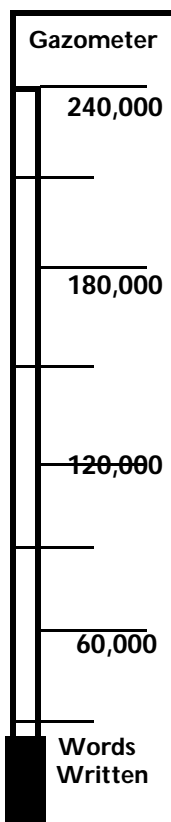
Following up a lead suggested by a local conservation officer, just before Christmas I visited West Bromwich (travelling by the new Metro line, which itself has some ceramic decoration). I found an absolutely stunning tile, mosaic



and faience interior at the 1907 Carnegie Free Library, now Sandwell Library, in West Bromwich High Street, next door to the Town Hall (which itself had acres of tile pavement). There was another pavement in the nearby Old Grammar School building—which also had good red terracotta dressings—and finally the Kendrick's building, with its jolly red terracotta facade, now looking a little unloved. But the library was the most surprising of all—how had it escaped the database for so long?

## A LAST WORD ON POWELL'S

Now for a final word on these Powell's opus sectile panels, often found in church decoration schemes in conjunction with glass tiles, mosaics and (even!) ceramic tiles. Recently more and more of these schemes have come to light, and it appeared that nobody was taking a great deal of interest in them—the materials, being neither quite 'pure' glass nor ceramic, appeared not to appeal to researchers. I checked the Powell's archive at the Museum of London for more information, to no avail, then tried the V&A Archive of Art & Design, housed in a gigantic building (the old National Savings Bank HQ) at Olympia. Here I found that all Powell's vast output of windows and opus sectile panels had been listed individually by location. This huge task had only recently been completed, and I was able to go through this 400-page work and extract details of many panels. It turns out that there were probably about 600 made, most going to churches as single panels but with a few schemes involving panels ordered over tens of years; the Todmorden church was one of these—quite rare—sites. So now we have the information necessary to comment constructively on specific sites, but as they are not quite part of our main remit, that's probably enough Powell's for now!



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## Database Site Count

Date	Number of Sites in Database
February 2001	3977
January 2000	3485
April 1999	2287
March 1997	1443

## County Durham—Extracts from the first draft of the Gazetteer

### DARLINGTON

Just north of the town centre on NORTHGATE is the old **Technical College**, now council offices, an imposing pile designed in 1893-6 by G. Gordon Hoskins, once clerk to Alfred Waterhouse. This handsome building displays oodles of buff Burmantofts terracotta in a vaguely perpendicular style, right up to a pair of inspiring apotropaic figures on its pediment. Opposite is a real curiosity, a heavily overpainted faience facade, part of a terrace, displaying a plaque commemorating Edward Pease, backer of the Stockton & Darlington Railway; this facade, however, is in poor condition. Across the rather soulless town centre in PARKGATE is **Darlington Civic Theatre**, built as the Hippodrome (or Palace) in 1907 and also designed by Hoskins. Again there are lashings of buff terracotta, in just the same shade as that of the Technical College, thus the manufacturer is very probably Burmantofts; the theatre was renovated in 1990. Just east on the corner of HARGREAVE TERRACE is the **Black Swan**. This fine pub has a dark green glazed brick



facade incorporating five superb (although somewhat battered) tube-lined panels, each bearing a black swan in one of three different designs. The maker is unknown, but given the northerly location, could well be Duncan's of Glasgow. East again beneath the railway bridge to NEASHAM ROAD, where **St John's Church** stands at the junction with Yarm Road (close to Darlington railway station). St John

the Evangelist, whose imposing square tower was never crowned with the spire it clearly deserves, was built in 1847-8 by local architect John Middleton. The chancel pavement, donated by Herbert Minton in 1849, is an atypical arrangement of tiles including symbols of St John and vine leaves on blue ground.

### HARTLEPOOL

Ceramic interest in Hartlepool centres on the new town of West Hartlepool, begun with the construction of new docks in 1847, rather than old Hartlepool itself, away on the distant headland.

The **Railway Station** - whose sole remaining platform houses a Craven Dunnill North Eastern Railway map, dating from the early 1900s - stands just off CHURCH STREET, where a truly bizarre faience facade is to be



found at the **Shades Hotel**. Barley-sugar style columns define the fenestration, while above runs a frieze of womanly (and rather bored) bacchantes, their arms outstretched and holding fast to urns, themselves supported by keystones in the shape of female heads. The facade was put up around 1900 and is made all the stranger by the almost non-ceramic appearance of the faience, perhaps a result of over-painting. The Shades is on the corner of LYNN STREET, wherein stands



another ceramic pub, the **Market Hotel** (now a restaurant). Here the facade, which dates from the same period, is a more restrained but still decorative composition in green, buff and brown, with a nicely rounded bay window.

At the west end of Church Street, one of the town's earliest streets, is CHURCH SQUARE and the striking pinky-red brick and terracotta of the old **Municipal Buildings**, which dates mostly from 1886-9. The architect in this period of building was Richard Knill Freeman of Manchester, who won the commission in competition. There is much ceramic decoration, and perhaps this abundance of ornamentation is only to be expected from an architect who became something of a specialist in the design of pleasure pier pavilions. West of the central area at 125-7 PARK ROAD is a splendidly preserved butcher's shop interior dating from 1898. **Leighton's** was originally just one in a row of similarly tiled shops, but is now the sole working survivor. Designed by the local architect James Garry, its interior features meat rails and massive metal hooks as well as decorative (but not pictorial) wall tiling, mainly in blue and white and possibly by Minton Hollins.

### SUNDERLAND

Elephants and other peculiar beasts peer down from the facade of the wonderfully wacky indo-gothic **Elephant Tea Rooms** (now Royal Bank of Scotland), which stands at the important High Street and FAWCETT STREET corner. Since 1879, when the elegant Wear Bridge opened to provide a direct rail connection with Newcastle, this has been the crossing point of the two main axes of this new city. Behind Fawcett Street is the railway station, now merely a scruffy platform for troglodytic customers, while High Street West provides a link with Sunderland's original centre near the dockside. The Tea Rooms was designed by the idiosyncratic and imaginative local architect Frank Caws in 1873-7; the elephants and the rest of the eccentric, almost white terracotta dressings are by Doulton. The replacement ground floor facade is dreadful, but above it the elephants and other beasties are well preserved. Opposite is **Walkers Buildings** (1926), a decent enough off-white faience facade with much classical ornamentation, but rather overwhelmed in comparison with the elephants. At **21-22 Fawcett Street** is another Caws extravaganza, this time in bright red brick and pinky-red terracotta from Edwards of Ruabon. Above the dross of the modern facade are three layers of bow windows with oodles of frilly terracotta dressings, the whole topped by elongated shaped gables and finished off with a turret. This Moorish-inspired pair, built for Corder's the drapers, date from 1889-90. Caws loved colour and decoration, and planned to build a Tea Rooms-style bazaar down the east side of Fawcett Street; it would have been a great improvement on its current appearance.

