



Journey through the Valley of Stone

... a living history



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Selected Heritage sites

Heritage Sites

There are many fine examples of industrial archaeology, specifically quarrying archaeology throughout Rossendale. Here, the most interesting heritage sites, processing sites and tramways have been explored.

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Lee Quarry

This is the best example of old and modern workings, clearly identifiable sections in the east give an insight into large scale quarrying, involving a large workforce until the mid 1950's.

Lee Quarry extends between SD 863 208 and SD 870 210, approximately 1km south of Rockcliffe, with Lee Moss to the south and Holden Moor to the east.

Historical Summary

Historically, the quarry lay within the Brandwood Lower End subdivision of the Spotland township (Rochdale Parish).

Working life: early nineteenth century to present.

Quarry firms: James Hoyle (1820), James Holt (1834), r Williams (1870s), John Smith (1870s) Thomas Pilling (1870s), Richard Cunliffe (1870s), William Hoyle and Co (William Hoyle, Henry Wood, and John Heyworth, 1870s/80s), William Hoyle (1880s), Thomas Peel (1880s), Butterworth and Brooks (1880s), James Cunliffe(1880s), Nuttal and Brown (1880s), William Jackson (1890s 1900s), Myles Hardman (and executors, 1900-1910s), Thomas Radcliffe (latter Messrs Ratcliffe and Sons, 1900 -1956), Lovick and Philipson (1900s), Messrs Henry Wood and Sons (1910s), Castleton Sand and Gravel Quarries Ltd (1956-1960s), Eskett Quarries Ltd (after 1974, Bardon Roadstone (current).

Geology: upper Haslingden Flags and shale with Rough Rock to south east.

Methods: hillside outcroppings, open pit working and mining. Extensive mechanisation from at least the 1880s, included steam powered cranes, blasting, pneumatic rock drills. Electricity was used from c1919. Transport: prior to 1880s, horse and cart was used to transport stone away. From c 1880, there was a large inclined plane down to Holts sidings, Lee Mill, on the mainline railway; with extensive tramway networks in the quarry (see Roberts 1974). In twentieth century, road haulage was employed, including early steam wagons (Taylor 1991).

Products: including flags, setts, kerbs, manhole covers, later concrete flags and kerbs, and roadstone.



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Events

C1810 Brandwood survey names owner/occupier of 'A farm call'd Lee' as James Hoyle.

1819-20 Spotland Township survey names owner/occupier of 'Lee' and a stone quarry as James Hoyle (see also Taylor 1991) 1834 Spotland Survey names James Holt as owner of Lee Farm (occupied by George Butterworth) and occupier of a stone quarry.

By 1844 1820 quarry called Lee Delf. Stone carted or sleighed down to Lee Farm and through Lee Wood or to Stubblelee, hence to new railway line (Taylor 1991).

1848 OS 6" 1st edn (sheet 81) shows small 'sandstone Quarry' at the approximate centre of what became Lee Quarry, with 'Lee Delf' to the south.

1873-1900 At least 14 separate firms of quarry owners worked at Lee quarries (Taylor 1991).

1876 Owned by Mr Williams (Davies 1985-96).

1878 Advertisement for letting contracts regarding the walls and piers of the tramway incline (Davies 1985-96, Taylor 1991).

1880 New tramway mentioned as ready for opening (Davies 1985 -96).

1878-82 Series of advertisements for sale and letting of quarries and plant at Lee Quarries. These adverts name several specific quarries which were presumably part of the complex: Top Hole Quarry, Face Quarry, Inghams Quarry, Dowhole Quarry and Steam Crane Quarry. Named plant includes: polishing mill, steam engine and boiler, gearing and tackle, hand cranes, steam crane, smithy, cartwrights shops, stone carts and draught horses, stables, tram wagons, steel hammers, barrows, trestles, crow bars, picks, shovels, wedges, drills, cabins (wood and stone).



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Named quarrying concerns: 1878 –the late John Smith 1879 – R Williams (in liquidation) 1882 – Richard Cunliffe (1814 -1880) 1883 William Hoyle and Co (dissolved between William Hoyle, Henry Wood, and John Heyworth).

1883 Accident at Lee quarries 'owned by Thomas Peel'.

1884 Butterworth and Brooks at High Delf, Lee Wood.

1884 L Lancs and Yorks Railway Co leased out land at Lee Mill for stone breakin – presumably what became known as Holt's sidings, serving Lee quarry (Taylor 1991)

1886 Sale of 'Engine Crane Quarry', Lee Mill as going concern, by James Cunli (Taylor 1991)

1887 Thomas Peel's plans for a machine house at Lee rail siding approved (Taylor 1991).

1887-9 64 blocks of stone from Lee Quarries were used to build the four masonry pier foundations of the Eifel Tower in Paris (Taylor 1991, Bowd).

1889 Sale of plant at Grit Rock Quarry, Lee Moor by Nuttal and Brown (Taylor 1991).

1891 Thomas Peel advertised for labour to drive 3' tunnel at Lee quarries (Davies 1985-96, Taylor 1991).

1894 Thomas Peel's polishing mill for sale (Taylor 1991)

1895 Ten ton steam crane built by Andrew Ashworth for underground quarries at Lee (Taylor 1991)

1898 Accident at Jackson's Quarry, Lee Wood (Davies 1985-96).

1900 Myles Hardman bought the quarry business of his father-in-law, Thomas Peel (1832-1900), at Lee quarries (Taylor 1991).

1901 William Jackson built stone polishing mill at Lee, without planning permission (Taylor 1991).

1901 At least five firms operating in the quarry (Roberts 1974, 19).

1905 Accident to employee of executors of Myles Hardman, Lee Wood (Davies 1985 - 96).

1906 Lovick and Philipson at Lee quarries (Taylor 1991).

1908 Accidents to employee of William Jackson at Holts sidings saw mill.

1908 Accidents to employees of Executors of Myles Hardman, on Holts Railway sidings, Lee Mill (Davies 1985-96).

1908 Stone goods supplied from Lee quarries included: Lonky sets, machined 'barns' (ie 3" thick flags or paving stones), manhole covers, curb stones, channels (Taylor 1991).

1910 Accident to employee of executors of Myles Hardman, Lee Quarries (Davies 1985-96).

1912 Executors of Myles Hardman, Lee Quarries had a contract to supply man hole c overs to Bacup Corporation (Taylor 1991).



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1913 Sale of quarry plant of Messrs Henry Wood and Sons, at Lee Quarry, included steam cranes, hand cranes, stone wagons (3'3" gauge), chains, barrows, wood shelters, tol houses, hammers, picks, spades, drills, wedges (Davies 1985-96).

1916 J Hutchinson, quarry manager for executors of Myles Hardman and latterly for Thomas Ratcliffe, died (Taylor 1991).

1919 Electricity supply made to Lee Mill for Thomas Ratcliffe (Taylor 1991).

1924 Accident at Lee Quarries- Thomas Ratcliffe, proprietor killed (Davies 1985 -96, Taylor 1991).

1925 Application for additional electricity to the quarry (Taylor 1991).

1926 William Jackson, former operator of Lee quarries died (Taylor 1991).

1926 Thomas Radcliffe (Bacup) Ltd registered on 16 Oct, it was owned by four Ratcliffe brothers: Robert, Fred, Thomas, Norman (Davies 1985-96 Taylor 1991).

1928 Application for additional electricity to the quarry (Taylor 1991).

1928 OS map shows further expanded 'Lee Quarries' again with a tramway network, inclined plane, 'cranes', 'travelling cranes', and 'mineral railway'. It also had two 'stone crushers'.

1929 Accidents at Messrs Ratcliffe and sons, Lee Quarries (Davies 1985 -96).

1930 Accident at Messrs Ratcliffe and sons, Lee Quarries (Davies 1985 -96).

1930 Ratcliffes had three steam wagons to cart crushed stone away. Also still employed horses and wagons in the quarry (Taylor 1991).

1931 Visit, by North of England quarry owners and managers, to Lee Quarries of Messrs Thomas Ratcliffe (Bacup) Ltd. Demonstration of rock getting; hand and machine cutting (into flags, setts and kerbs); and dressing by masons. Tour also looked at: electric plant and transformer house, air compressor and pneumatic tools, steam cranes, joiners shop, mechanics shop, blacksmiths shop, two crushing plants, storage (for 1,000 tons of stone), planning machines, railway and road transport setup. Employed 200 men, compared to ten 25 years before (Davies 1985-96, Taylor 1991).

1933 Accident at Messrs Ratcliffe and Sons, Lee Quarries (Davies 1985-96)

1934 Accident at Messrs Ratcliffe and Sons, Lee Quarries (Davies 1985-96)

1936 Destruction by fire of winding house and drum on incline at Messrs Ratcliffe and Sons, Lee Quarries (Davies 1985-96).

1936 Report to Thomas Ratcliffe (Bacup) Ltd intent to manufacture hydraulic pressed concrete flags (a large press being built), and concrete kerbs (with vibratory plant) (Davies 1985-96, Taylor 1991).

1938 Messrs Ratcliffe and sons, Lee Quarries building road to replace the tramway incline (Davies 1985-96).



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1940/1 T Ratcliffe applied for electricity supply to Lee Quarry (Taylor 1991).

C1940 Thomas Ratcliffe died.

1948-53 References to Ratcliffes licence to store explosives at Lee, include reference to new store completed in 1950 (Taylor 1991).

1949 Accident at Messrs Ratcliffe and Sons, Lee Quarries (Davies 1985-96).

1952 Robert Ratcliffe died.

1953/4 Ratcliffes supplied crushed stone to Bacup Corporation (Taylor1991).

1954 Fred Ratcliffe died (1891-1954). 1956/7 Castleton Sand and Gravel Quarries Ltd took over the firm of Thomas Ratcliffe (Bacup) Ltd (based at Wood Land, Leeds). For several years they converted the waste tips to crushed stone for concrete and road materials. Later they returned to face quarrying (Taylor 1991).

1959 Castleton Sand and Gravel Quarries Ltd applications to store explosives at Lee Quarry in existing buildings. There are also disputes with Bacup Corporation regarding water supply to the quarry, resulting in a pumping station being built on the south bank of the Irwell, with a pipe into the quarry. (Taylor 1991).

1960s Castleton Sand and Gravel Quarries Ltd supplied crushed stone from Lee Quarries for M62 construction. A new crushing plant was installed (Taylor 1991).

1974 Subsequent to 1974 Eskett Quarries Ltd took over from Castleton Sand and Gravel Quarries Ltd (Taylor1991).

1990s Bardon Roadstone were the owners of the quarry.

Summary of Surviving Remains: Lee Quarry covers a large area, the basic formation of which has been through the quarrying of outcropping stone. The main working face, with three very deep open pits, runs along the east and south side of the quarry with extensive spoil to the north incorporating multi-fingered spoil heaps. A single audit for underground extraction of stone was noted. The western half of the quarry is continuous with Greens quarry. At the line of the incline/roadway there are several associated structures and leats. The incline leads to Holts sidings. The quarry is extremely rich in associated quarry features, including the remains of numerous structures and earthwork platforms (representing quarrymen's shelters, storage buildings, and processing areas), heaps of part finished quarry products and stone offcuts, crane bases, and extensive tramway remains, including the bases for travelling cranes.