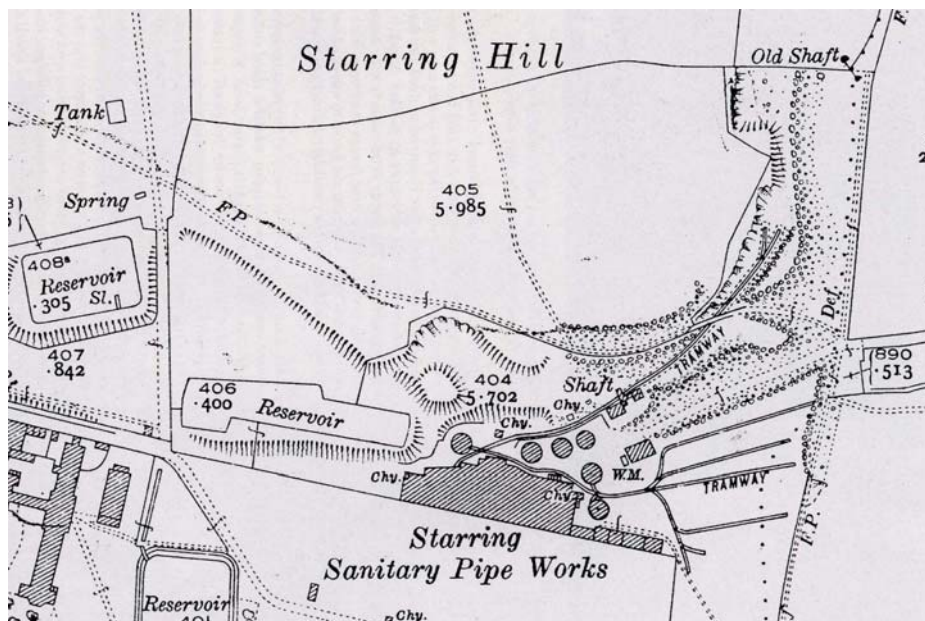


National Archaeology Week 2006

Starring Brick & Pipe Works Littleborough

During National Archaeology Week 2006 from 15th to 23rd July Manchester Regional Industrial Archaeology Society (MRIAS) and Littleborough Historical and Archaeological Society (LHAS) will be carrying out an evaluation survey of Starring Brick and Pipe Works Littleborough.

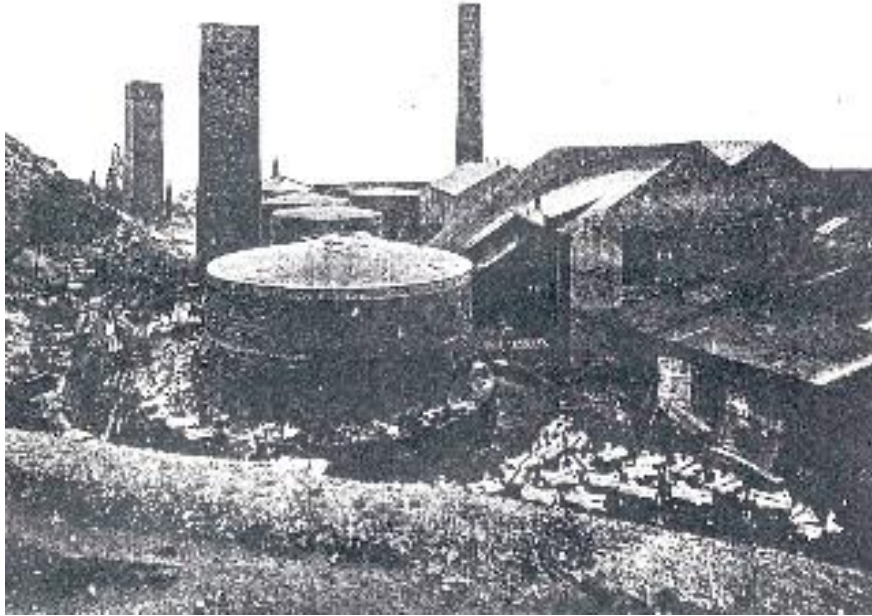
In 1868 Ralph Ashworth opened a brick and pipe works at Starring, close to Littleborough and in 1872 a limited company Ralph Ashworth & Co Ltd was formed to raise capital to expand the works. In 1905 the company went into liquidation and was bought by the Dransfield family who continued to trade as Ralph Ashworth & Co Ltd. The works ceased production during the Second World War and was demolished in the 1960s. The site is located just north of the A58 Rochdale to Halifax Road about 1 mile from Littleborough. It is next to what was the Rochdale Union Workhouse opened in 1877. The Workhouse became Birch Hill Hospital and is now largely closed. The site of the brickworks is currently owned by Mr Peter Hogan who has kindly given permission for LHAS & MRIAS to investigate the site.



1937 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of the site (NTS)

None of the buildings remain but there is surface evidence of the stockyards, the boiler house, kiln bases and tramways. There is good documentary evidence for the site, which includes a map series from first edition Ordnance Survey to the present day, newspaper articles from the Rochdale Times and Rochdale Observer and an extensively illustrated article published in the London and Provincial Magazine in September 1909. The works also featured in the first edition of *Archive* magazine in 1994. Photographs in the 1909 article show that the works was well integrated and highly mechanised and there were extensive stockyards for the finished products. The kilns had to be regularly rebuilt and the numbers and positions of the kilns changed

from time to time. Typically there were five kilns on the site but seven kilns are mentioned in the 1909 article. The clay and coal were obtained from a pit on the site. The clay used was a fine-grained quartzite sandstone called **Gannister**; the material is very hard when mined and has to be left to weather before it can be used. The material has a high silica content and is particularly suited to industrial products.



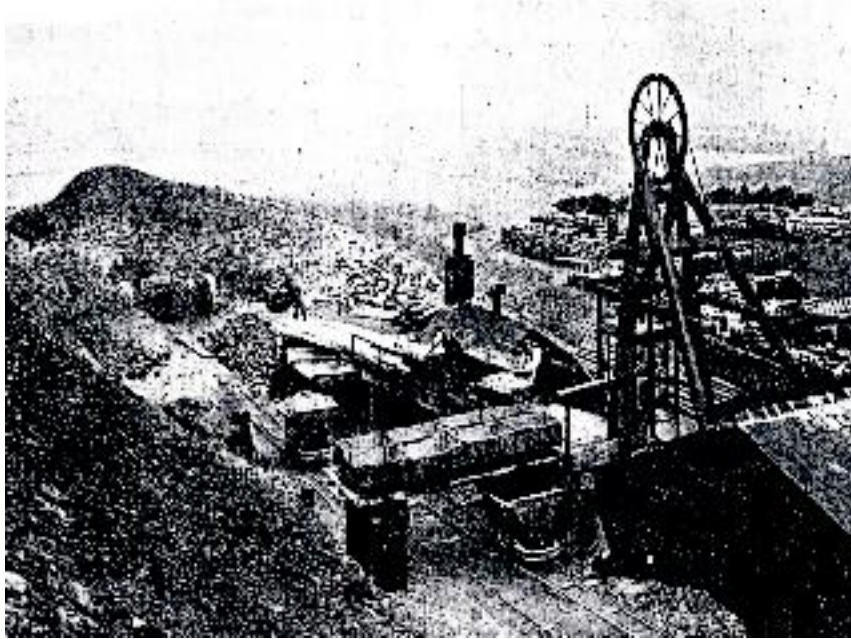
General view of the works in 1909 (London and Provincial Magazine)



The site of a kiln is shown in the foreground (PWB 2003)

The speciality of the works was glazed stoneware pipes and fittings but bricks, tiles, boiler blocks and other products were also manufactured. The London and Provincial Magazine states

Their export trade is enormous including almost every known country. At home they do a large trade with corporations and other public bodies, whilst they are on the lists of the Crown Agents for the Colonies and other government departments.



Starring pit headgear (London and Provincial Magazine 1909)



Starring stockyard (London and Provincial Magazine 1909)

The initial task during National Archaeology Week will be to survey the site and correlate the survey with the map evidence and the old photographs of the site. If time and manpower allows we will investigate the kiln flue structures and dig one of the kiln bases to give us further information on its construction. The survey will also be used to record the ecology of the site and the species of plants found on the site. A report will be prepared and the site will be recorded on the Historic Environment Record.

The site is easily accessible and during National Archaeology Week (15th – 23rd July) it will be open each day from 10.00am to 4.00 pm there is no charge and the public are welcome to visit.

Further details can be obtained from

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