

BARNACLE HALL BRICKWORKS

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The unusually named hamlet of Barnacle lies on the outskirts of Coventry, and at least one site for brick-making had an important presence in the area during the second half of the nineteenth century through to the early years of the twentieth century.

The history of the Barnacle Hall Brickworks reflects some of the same characteristics of many such yards in the nineteenth century – small in scale, enjoying intermittent bursts of activity, with frequent changes in those managing production, and an interesting after-life once the brickmaking days were over.

The story is very sketchy, and deserves more research, but some of the information unearthed is included in this account. One of the difficulties is that there may have been a number of small brickyards in the Barnacle area, and it is sometimes uncertain precisely which yard is being referred to in newspaper reports.

The main location is the 'Barnacle Hall Brickworks', the site of which lies south of Barnacle, on the eastern side of Shilton Lane, the opposite side of the road to Barnacle Hall itself which lies further north. The site of the works is now used by a scrap metal merchant. Access has proved to be impossible, but a Google aerial view indicates a remaining pool and evidence of earthworks.

1890s map of Barnacle, with Barnacle Hall adjacent to the western side of Shilton Lane, and the brickworks at the bottom of the map on the eastern side of the lane.



Whilst primarily an agricultural area, it did have good transport access – the road to Coventry was a well-established route, and the Oxford Canal lies a short distance to the south in the area of Sowe Common. Later, the LNWR rail route passed close by, with Shilton the nearest station.

The first specific reference to the Barnacle Hall Brick Yard seems to be with an advertisement in the Coventry Standard for 19th. June 1868

FOR SALE at the Barnacle Hall Brick Yard, near Sowe Common,
RED BRICKS, TILES and QUARRIES.
Orders received at the Brick Yard by Thomas Tallis
and by Mrs. Tookey, at Barnacle Hall.

Census Records indicate that Thomas Tallis lived in Jacker's Lane (now Jacker's Road) and was recorded in 1851 and 1861 as 'brickmaker', and in 1871 as 'brick manufacturer', now living on the Stoney Stanton Road.

Earlier than this, in the Coventry Standard of 24th. November 1854, an Auction of livestock, implements and 92 acres of grass-keeping from Barnacle Hall also included '100,000 BRICKS, 13,000 SOUGH TILES and brickmakers' tools, barrows, planks etc., the property of MR.THOMAS MOORE who is leaving the farm'.

Shortly afterwards, in the Coventry Standard of 15th. December 1854 there appears the following advert, referring to 'Shilton Lane Brickyard'.

CAPITAL BRICKYARD
TO BE LET ON ROYALTY

A very superior Piece of CLAY, at Barnacle, near to Bulkington and Shilton, known as Shilton Lane Brick-Yard, with an ample supply of Sand, and the Kiln standing thereon, near to good Roads, and Railway and Canal carriage.

MR BACON will show the premises, and for further particulars apply to Mr. W.F. PRIDMORE, Wyken Grange, or to BROWN AND CLARKE, Auctioneers, Coventry.

W.F. Pridmore was a major landowner in the area, enjoying the benefits of resources that lay beneath the ground of his estate.

The 'Shilton Lane Brick Yard' may be the same site as 'The Barnacle Hall brickworks' or perhaps another yard, and the picture is further confused by a reference in the Coventry Standard of 12th. February 1858 advertising the sale of various items of timber from Barnacle Hall Farm, "contiguous to Mr. Adams's Brick Yard".

Sorting out these various locations, and the sequence of ownership and occupation requires further research, but at least it confirms that brickmaking was a feature of the area in the mid-nineteenth century.

There is a gap in references to brickyards in the area until much later in the century, and then there is a burst of activity (in various ways) associated with the brickyard.

Thomas Golby was a speculative builder, born in Hillmorton, but carried out much of his work in Earlsdon in Coventry, where Palmerston Road is the the best surviving example, with distinctive frontages largely intact today, despite changes made to the bay windows.

The 1907 Photograph courtesy of David Fry: Earlsdon & Chapelfields Explored
(in 'The Coventry We Have Lost' series)



1907



2021

However, building was only one of Thomas Golby's business ventures. He turned his talents to many activities including road-making, the cycle trade (forming the -short-lived – 'New Coventry Company') and brickmaking. He also helped two brothers-in-law (by the names of Palford and Leicester) to start a business in Bexhill, although this soon faltered.

Sadly – despite seeming ever-alert to 'business opportunities' – he did not back this with the entrepreneurial skills and financial acumen to see them through. Reading the Court reports of his later bankruptcy proceedings, his experience seemed to be a mixture of boundless optimism, misguided project selection, and inadequate and inaccurate book-keeping – hardly a combination to guarantee business success!

He embarked on the manufacture of bricks largely because of the prohibitive price of bricks in Coventry, but he soon discovered that the venture absorbed more of his funds than he had anticipated, with the brickworks in need of significant investment. He was being forced to attend to the brickworks two or three days a week, to the detriment of his other ventures. As a result, he decided to form a limited company in 1899 to raise funds.

The Coventry Evening Telegraph reported on 7th. July 1899 that a company had been registered to acquire the business carried on by Thomas G. Golby, at Barnacle "to crush, win, get, quarry, smelt, calcine, refine, prepare for market, and deal in ore, clay brick earth, metal, fire clay, bricks, tiles, pipes, and mineral substances".

The company had a capital of £3000, in £1 shares, and the subscribers were:

- Thomas G. Golby, Earlsdon, Coventry, brick manufacturer;
- Mrs. Edith M. Golby, Earlsdon, Coventry;
- William R. Goate, Little Park Street Coventry, solicitor;
- Herbert F.W.Nicholls, Stoneleigh, builders' manager;
- George Golby, 18, Paradise Street, Rugby, builder;
- Arthur J. Golby, 18, Paradise Street, Rugby, builder;
- Frederick A. Bullock, Earlsdon, solicitor.

Matters did not seem to improve and he was declared bankrupt in 1901. His gross liabilities amounted to £6,257 17s 9d, offset by assets of £560, leaving a deficiency of £5,697 16s 11d. (equivalent to just under £900,00 in today's money).

Not surprisingly, soon afterwards the plant, tools and stocks of the Barnacle Hall Brickworks were up for sale by the order of the Receiver. The auction sale notice of 19th. September 1902 in the Coventry Herald appeals to 'BUILDERS, CONTRACTORS & OTHERS' to bid for

'The WHOLE of the LOOSE PLANT, TOOLS and STOCK-IN-TRADE, comprising 90,000 of best pressed moulded and common red bricks, 2,500 8in. and 9in. quarries, carts, barrows, Norris's patent brick presses, dust crusher, office furniture, capital black cart mare and effects'. Coventry Herald 19 Sept. 1902

The sale was clearly designed to raise funds for the creditors, and soon afterwards further change was being contemplated with the brickyard 'To Be Let'.

BARNACLE HALL BRICKYARD

TO BE LET, with immediate possession, the above brickyard, situate midway between rugby and Nuneaton, about 2 miles from Shilton station on the Trent Valley railway, and about 1 mile from the Coventry and Oxford canal.

The clay is of good quality, and there is also a good bed of sand. The buildings consist of foreman's house, office, 4 kilns, drying shed, 4-stall stable, with loft over, oil shed.

The machinery in the yard consists of horizontal steam engine, 30 horse power; boiler, wire-cut brick machine, 2 injectors to boiler, injector down clay-hole.

A field of pasture land adjoining will also be with above occupation.

For further particulars and to view, apply to Mr. W.F.PRIDMORE, Wyken House, Coventry

It was not until May 1904 that three workers who had experience at two the area's most important brickworks decided to take on the responsibility of the Barnacle Hall brickyard, revealed by this advert in the Coventry Evening Telegraph for May 3rd. 1904

BARNACLE HALL BRICK WORKS,
Barnacle, near Coventry

JOSEPH SIMPSON AND
THOMAS ROSE

Late of Webster's Brick works, Stoney Stanton Road, and

WILLIAM ALLEN

Late of Stanley Bros., Nuneaton, and also Webster's Brick Works, Coventry

Have pleasure in stating that they have taken over the above BRICK WORKS, and beg respectfully to solicit the patronage and support of the Builders of Coventry and district.

A GOOD SUPPLY OF EXCELLENT SAND
ALWAYS OBTAINABLE

All orders received by them shall receive prompt and careful attention.

This arrangement lasts until 1907, when Joseph Simpson leaves the partnership. Beyond this, further into the twentieth century, information seems very sparse, and seeking to identify the nature of the site using modern tools such as 'Google Earth' and 'Magicmap' reveals quite an extensive area with obvious earthworks and pool, adjacent to what is called Gun Range Farm, with the entrance to the 'recycling yard' adjacent.

The natural response to this is to suggest that the area at some stage functioned as a gun range, and it would be good to know if anyone can confirm this. Gun Range Farm also seems to have been the home to a slaughter house, first mentioned in an advert placed in the Coventry Herald of 3rd. November 1928:

MISS C. PAYNE
Licensed Horse and Cattle Slaughterer
GUN RANGE FARM, BARNACLE, COVENTRY

By the late 1930s, the slaughtering business seems to have been carried on by Sydney Cockerill, with regular adverts in, local papers e.g. Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser 20th. September 1946

**WANTED
HORSES AND COWS
DEAD OR ALIVE**
£2 each given for Screw Cows*.
Up to £5 given for Old Horses
Prompt cash
Apply: SYDNEY COCKERILL
Licensed Horse and Cattle Slaughterer

(As far as I can tell, Screw Cows are those suffering from lameness caused by screw claw, a condition that affects the alignment of the hoof.)*

Gun Range Farm is private, and the brickworks site has become a 'recycling yard', dealing in scrap metal, and access has not been possible, so (not very helpful) photographs have to be taken from Shilton Lane, and these give no clue to the site's former life as a brickyard.



Entrance to
former Barnacle
Hall Brickworks

Image courtesy of Google maps