

A Town of Potters

Mexborough's rich pottery history

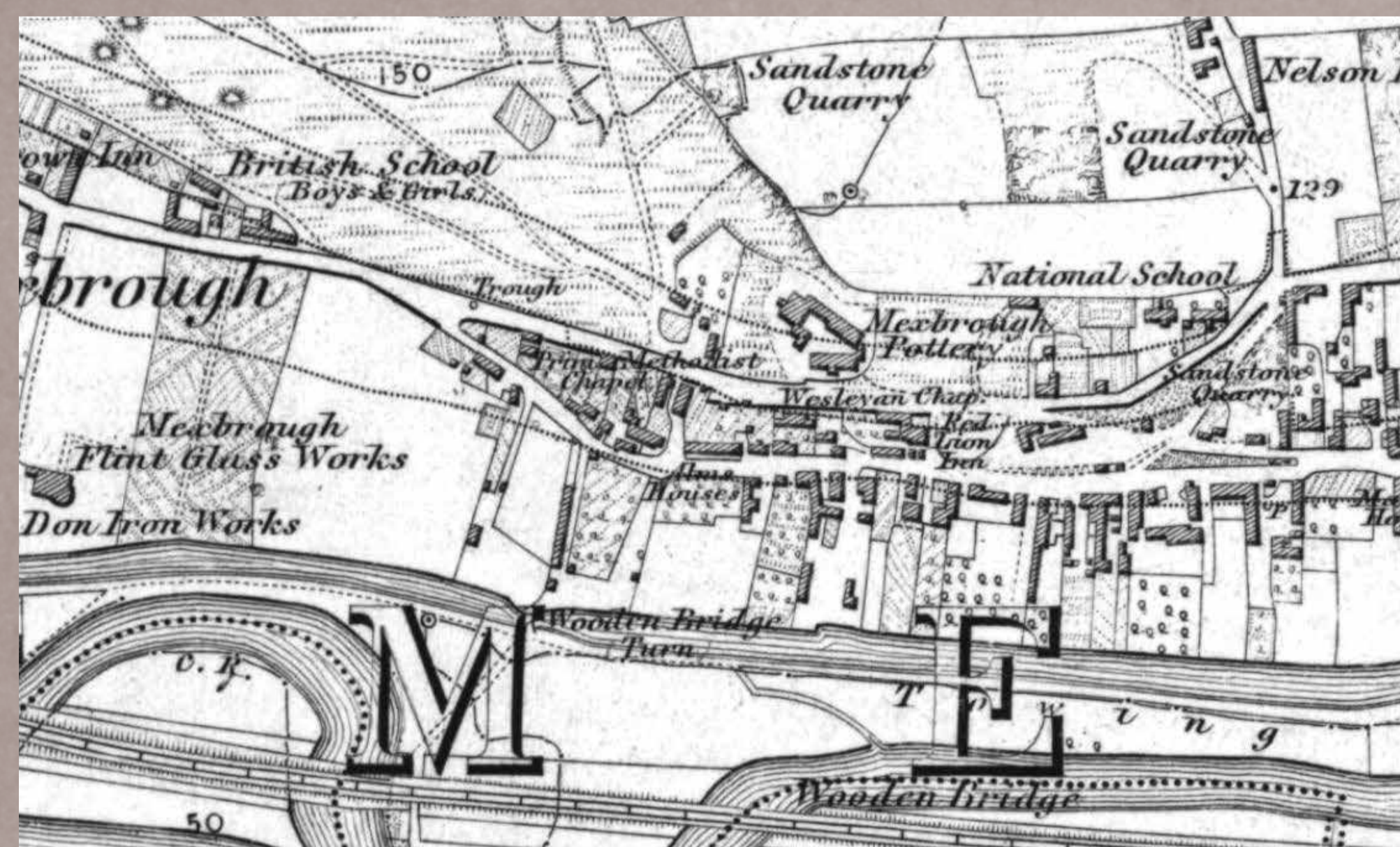
The earliest documented pottery in Mexborough dates from the late 18th century. Mexborough Old Pottery, the Rock Pottery, Emery's Pottery and Alfred Baguley's Decorating Business were all based in the town.

During the 19th century hundreds of potters lived and worked in Mexborough. They formed an active part of the community but occasionally found themselves in trouble. In 1804 Ralph Whitaker, a potter from Mexborough, was

charged with "riot and assault" and John Wragg was charged with stealing a teapot, ewer, jug, bowls, cups and saucers from Mexborough Old Pottery.

The **Rock Pottery** was owned by the industrialist John Reed. In 1859 he commissioned emerging local sculptor Robert Glassby to produce a decorative arch for his garden. The arch can now be seen in the grounds of Mexborough Almshouses.

This rich history is kept alive by collectors and enthusiasts. One of the leading local pottery experts is Mexborough's own **Graham Oliver**, former guitarist for heavy metal band Saxon.



1854 Ordnance Survey Map



Site of Mexborough Rock Pottery

Forgotten
Potteries
of the Dearne
Valley

Beyond Rockingham

The Don Pottery in Swinton

Rockingham Pottery in Swinton is by far the best known of all Yorkshire potteries and the porcelain products made there are amongst the finest ever produced. They received **royal commissions** and had an international reputation.

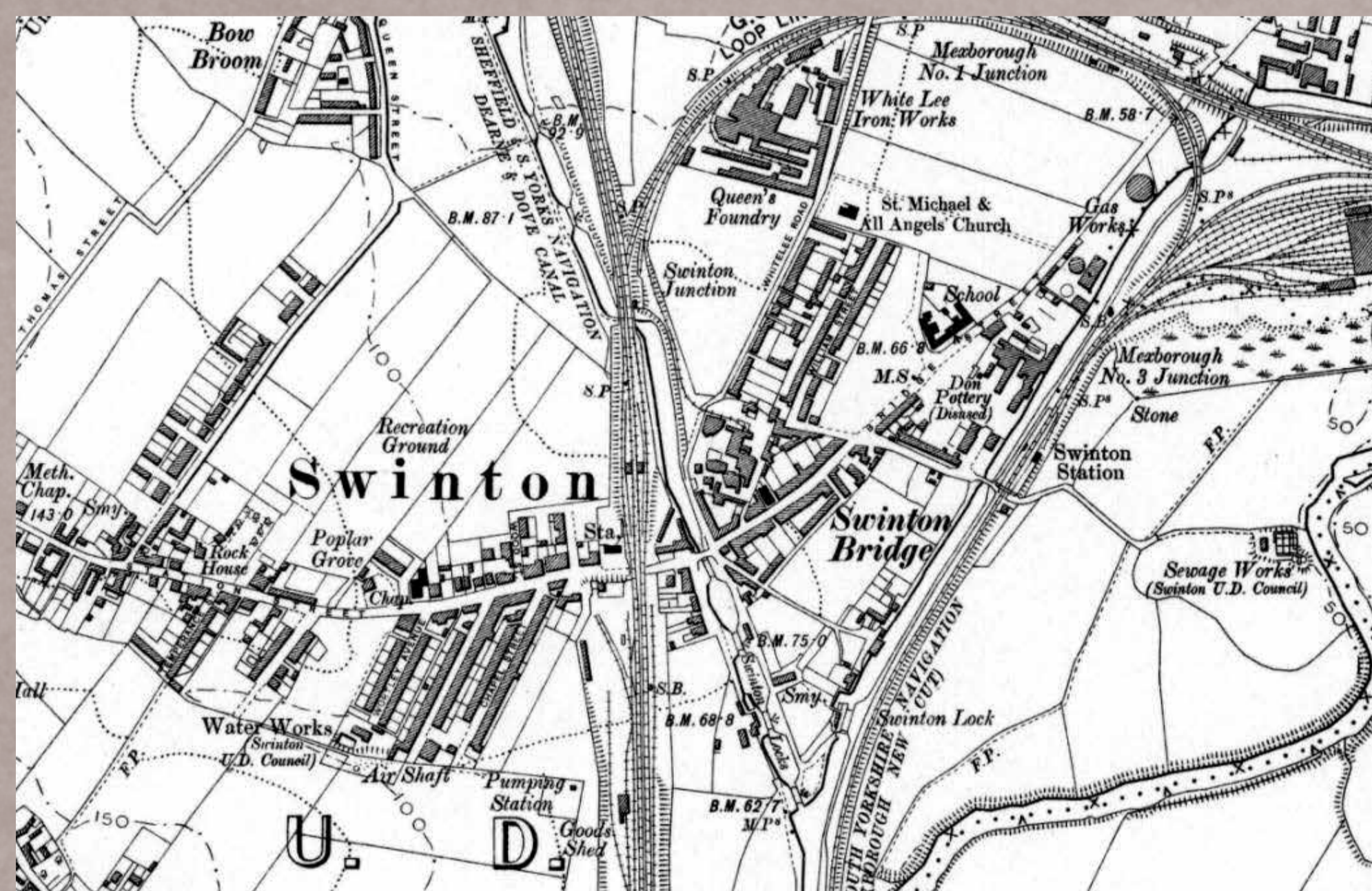
However, Rockingham was not the only large pottery in Swinton. The **Don Pottery** (1801-1893) was situated on the bank of the Don Navigation and used its own boat to bring in high quality coal for the kilns from Earl Fitzwilliam's

Elsecar Colliery. The Don Pottery exported pots from Swinton across the world. Joseph Green, whose father owned the pottery, regularly visited Rio de Janeiro as a merchant in the early 19th century.

The Greens went bankrupt in 1834 and the Barkers then took over the Don Pottery. Samuel Barker, from Staffordshire, also ran the Mexborough Old Pottery and made a great **financial success** of both. When his son Henry died in 1876 he left an estate worth £50,000, the equivalent of over £4 million today.



Site of Don Pottery, Swinton



1904 Ordnance Survey Map

Forgotten
Potteries
of the Dearne
Valley

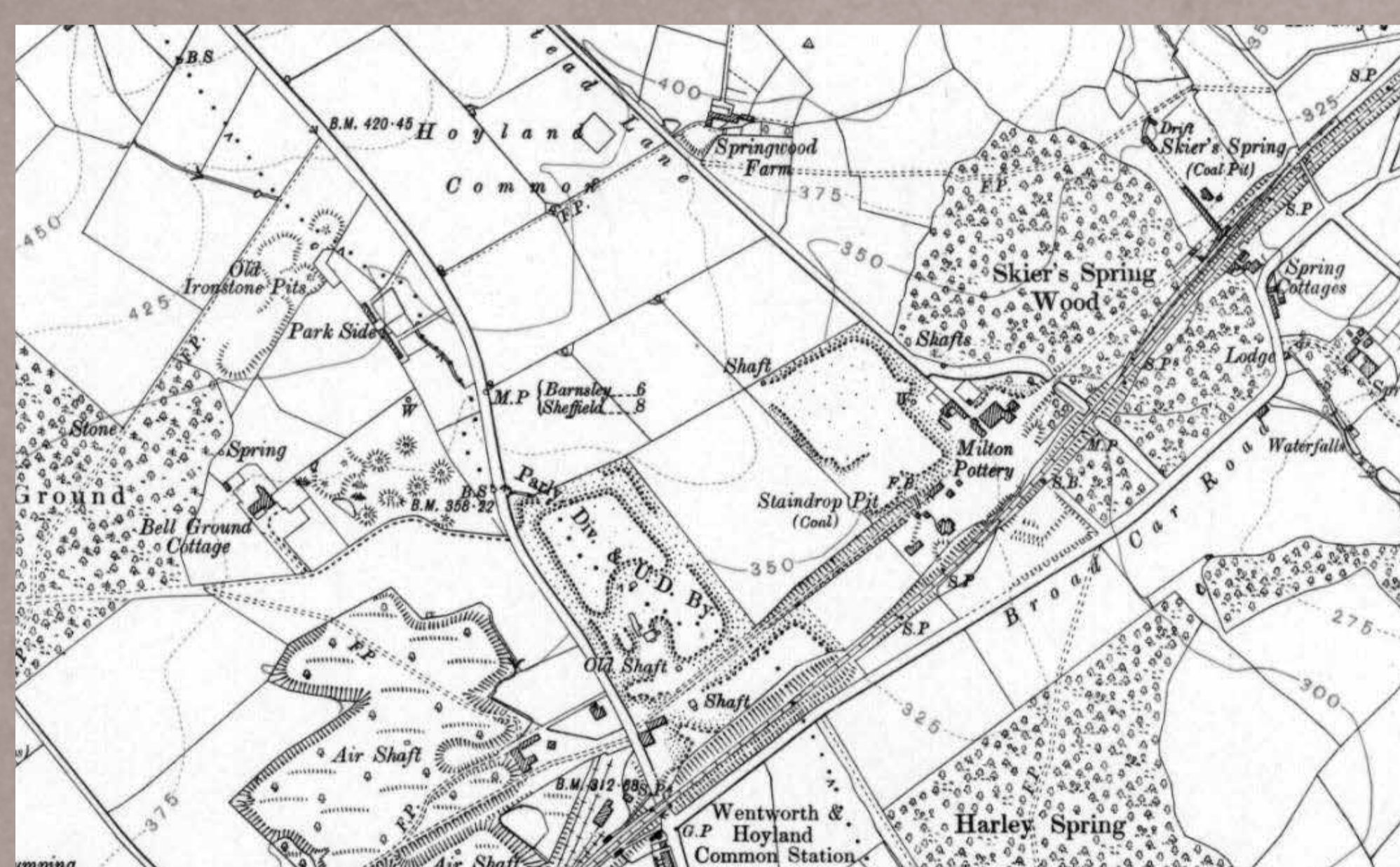
Pits and Pots

The last days of pottery in the Dearne Valley

Coal mines often produced their own bricks onsite but in 1902, on Earl Fitzwilliam land, a pottery was built at Skiers Spring Colliery. The **Milton Pottery** was located where Stead Lane enters Skiers Spring Wood, south of Hoyland.

The location was perfect. It had a local supply of **clay**, an abundance of cheap **coal** and excellent **transport** links. The pottery included buildings for throwing and drying pots and a large kiln capable of firing 3000 items.

The manager was David Keir, a potter from Whitehaven in Cumbria, who lived with his family on Allott Street in Hoyland. The pottery **employed eight men** and made plant pots, kitchenware and other household items. It closed in 1937.



1929 Ordnance Survey Map



Site of Milton Pottery, Hoyland

Forgotten
Potteries
of the Dearne
Valley

Scandal at a Rural Pottery

The Twiggs at Newhill

In the 19th century Newhill was a small hamlet just south of Wath-upon-Dearne. In 1809 a local potter, **Joseph Twigg**, bought some land in the area. He then set about building Newhill Pottery. At its height it employed between 30 and 40 people, mostly women.

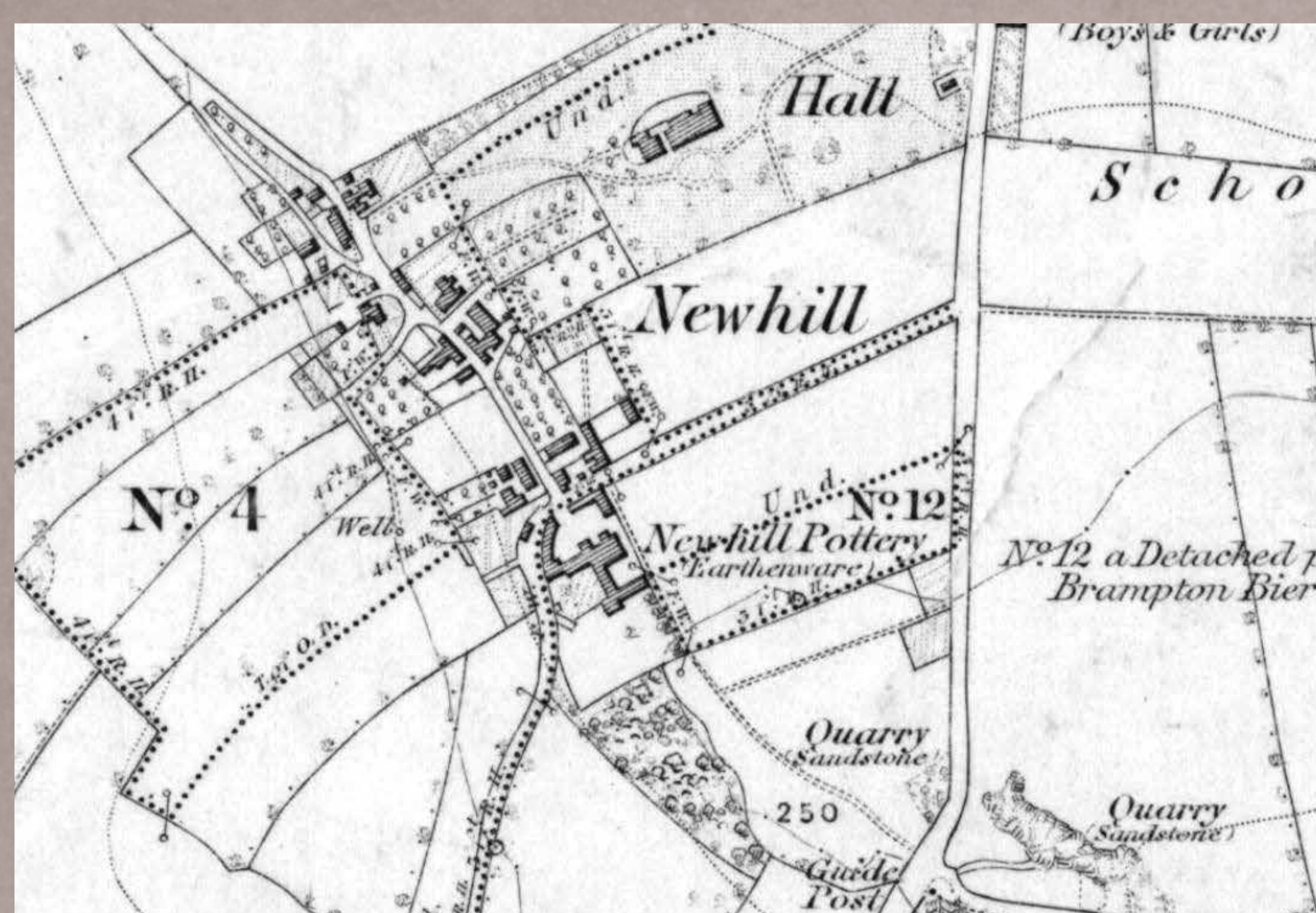
Scandal hit the pottery in 1827 when Joseph Twigg was accused of stealing by the Bramelds of Rockingham.

“Various articles used in the manufacture of China and Earthenware have been **feloniously stolen** and carried away from the Premises of the said Thomas Brameld (Rockingham Pottery, Swinton) and he hath good cause to suspect, and actually doth suspects Joseph Twigg of Newhill.”

Thomas Bramelds
statement under oath.

In spite of evidence and several witnesses Joseph Twigg was found **not guilty**.

Newhill Pottery stayed in the Twigg family until 1854. The pottery eventually closed in 1873 after various different owners had struggled to make a financial success of the site.



1855 Ordnance Survey Map



Site of Newhill Pottery, Wath-upon-Dearne

Forgotten
Potteries
of the Dearne
Valley

Forgotten Potteries of the Dearne Valley

A contemporary
response by
Adele Howitt

Adele Howitt is an artist who has long been associated with innovation, site specificity, and place making within the public realm. Her ceramic artwork has been exhibited across Europe including Sweden, Spain, Croatia and the Chelsea Flower Show.

For the Forgotten Potteries project Howitt worked closely with communities in Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster to produce this contemporary response to the theme.

“Researching the potteries of the Dearne Valley has influenced my re-interpretation of the landscape. The extensive pattern, symbols and aspirational landscapes found in these potteries are combined to create high-end table decorations through to utilitarian platters and tea services. The pottery industry sustained the area for many years, sherds can still be found in the ground here.”

Adele Howitt



Hoyland Library



Montgomery Hall, Wath-upon-Dearne



Swinton Library



Swinton Lock Activity Centre

Forgotten
Potteries
of the Dearne
Valley

Forgotten Potteries of the Dearne Valley

The Dearne Valley Landscape Partnership and Barnsley Museums are proud to present this exciting exhibition combining **historical** context and **contemporary** ceramic sculpture.

The potteries of South Yorkshire once rivalled those in Stoke-on-Trent. The most famous was the world renowned Rockingham Pottery in Swinton. During the nineteenth century over twenty other potteries in the Don and Dearne valleys made for a **thriving industrial scene** that is now largely forgotten.

Yorkshire artist, **Adele Howitt**, worked with local communities to produce work in response to the theme of the forgotten potteries. Howitt has exhibited across the UK and Europe, combining narrative and form to create beautiful individual pieces.

Credit must go to Heather Lawrence's *Yorkshire Pots and Potteries* (1974) and John D. Griffin's *The Yorkshire Potteries* (2012) for **inspiring and informing** this exhibition.

Barnsley Arts, Museums and Archives Service would like to acknowledge the support of the Dearne Valley Landscape Partnership, Heritage Lottery Fund, Swinton Lock Activity Centre, Montgomery Hall, Rotherham Museums and Libraries Service, Barnsley Libraries, Graham Oliver and Anthony Dockray.

www.discoverdearne.org.uk

 /discoverdearne

 @DiscoverDearne

#ForgottenPotteries

Forgotten
Potteries
of the Dearne
Valley