



# HARRIS & PEARSON, FIRE CLAY & BRICK WORKS, Stourbridge, ENGLAND.

## THIS OFFICE BUILDING

This building was erected in 1888 to be the new offices of the Harris & Pearson Company.

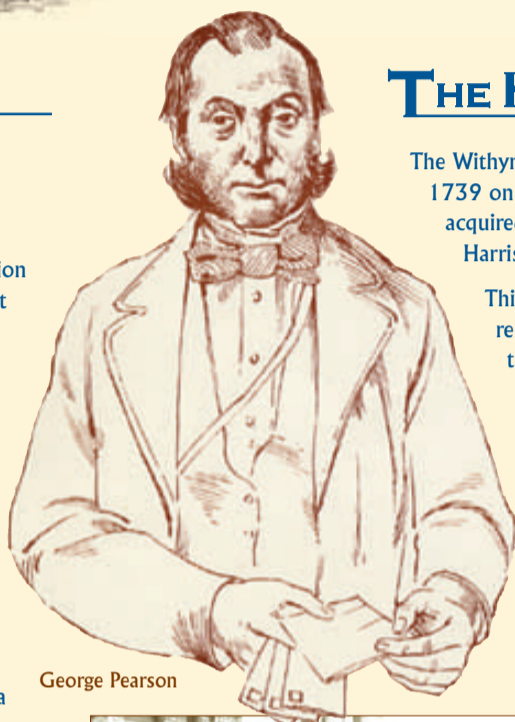
In 1996 it was saved from demolition at the eleventh hour when Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council served a Building Preservation Notice. This afforded temporary protection for the building until it was statutorily listed Grade II on 2nd September 1996.

The remarkable front elevation is constructed in refractory and polychromatic brickwork and terracotta detailing all made at the works from local clay. This façade includes both glazed and unglazed materials in a variety of colours including glazed fireclay sills which are particularly unusual. The white glazed lettering is a striking feature and a rare example of Victorian architectural graphics still in situ.

Internally glazed brick walls exist in the entrance hall, landing and lobby in a variety of colours. The toilet also has glazed brick walls, but the outstanding internal feature is the patterned quarry tiles to the landing, lobby and the small office (now converted to a toilet) on the first floor.

Prior to restoration the two storey building housed nine separate offices and in its restored state it contains seven offices.

The main entrance is through the central arch covering a weighbridge. The Avery's mechanism, dating from circa 1900-1920, is still in situ in the office alongside the weighbridge



George Pearson

## THE HARRIS & PEARSON COMPANY

The Withymoor Old Side Works was originally established in 1739 on a six acre site. Peter Harris and George Pearson acquired the lease of this land in 1852 on which the firm Harris & Pearson was founded.

This was an ideal time and place to start a fireclay related business: the industry was expanding rapidly; the site was surrounded by all the necessary transport links including the Stourbridge Canal, the Great Western Railway and the Black Country tram network which ran along Brettell Lane; and the essential raw materials and associated industries were readily accessible: clay, coal, iron, lime and sand were extracted or mined locally and ironworks and lime kilns were present nearby.

Twenty years later, in response to the ever increasing demand for their products, they acquired the lease, and eventually the freehold, of an additional nine acres of land on the other side of the canal on which they built the New Side Works.

When Peter Harris died in 1874, followed by George Pearson in 1899, the firm continued to be run by their sons. In the early 1900s the Company acquired a controlling interest in Trotter, Haines & Corbett Ltd from Stourbridge and in the 1920s and 30s it acquired several, similar, small businesses to become Harris & Pearson Ltd in 1931. In 1968 Dyson Group plc purchased the company, although it continued to trade independently until about 1980. Pitchford & Holland, another member of the Group, last used the Offices in 1990.



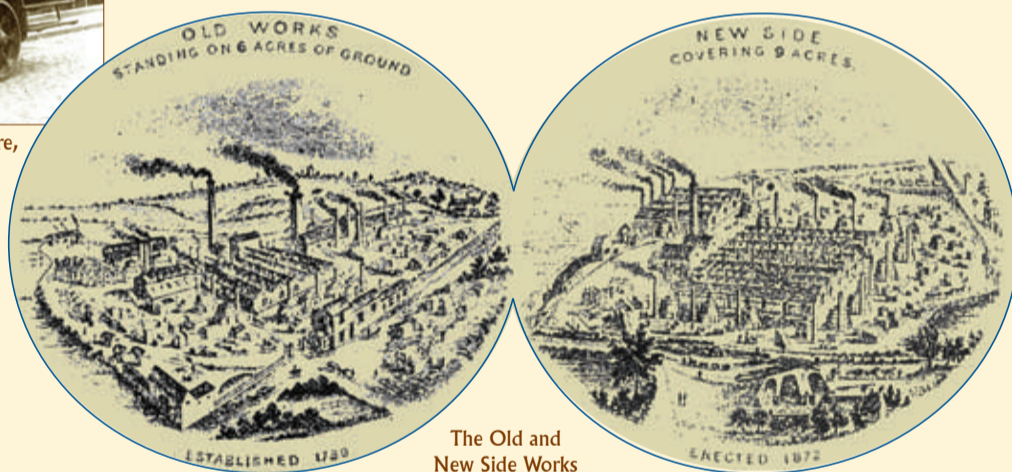
A selection of items produced to celebrate the centenary of the Harris & Pearson Company



The Works Outing to Weston-super-Mare, 4th July 1925

Far left: The original Avery steelyard for the weighbridge - the window behind this was inserted during the conservation works

Left: The landing showing the special blue/grey glazed brick on the walls and the patterned quarry tiles on the floor



The Old and New Side Works

## THE PRODUCTS



Above: Descriptions of products sold by the Harris & Pearson Company from a catalogue produced c.1883



Firebricks were just one type of refractory made by Harris & Pearson. Other types included brick and gas retorts, pressed bricks and wire cut bricks, furnace lining bricks, flue covers, boiler seating blocks and covering bricks and glazed bricks in various colours.

Examples of refractories illustrated in a brochure produced by the Refractories Industry in 1945

In the 19th Century the Harris & Pearson Brickyard was one of many companies that made refractories or 'materials that are resistant to heat'.

Refractories played a vital role in the growth of the Industrial Revolution as they were used (and in many cases still are), in the manufacture of almost every product that required heating as part of its process.



The Harris & Pearson Company also manufactured glass house pots which was highly skilled work and only carried out by one or two companies. The pots were built up gradually by hand and not fired but dried - a process which took around 6 months to complete. Harris & Pearson was one of the few firms that possessed a mine which yielded clay of sufficiently high quality to make these pots. They even sold this clay to other manufacturers.

Top left: Glass House Pots



Left: Furnace lining pieces on display at the Harris & Pearson yard

## SPONSORS

The West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust carried out a programme of conservation in 2004 which brought the building back into use as offices in February 2005.



The conservation project was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Architectural Heritage Fund, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Advantage West Midlands, the Manifold Trust, the Headley Trust, Dyson Industries and Avery Weigh-Tronix. The project team was led by S T Walker & Duckham, chartered architects, with John Austin & Partners as quantity surveyors and Hancock Wheelton & Ascough as structural engineers. The specialist contractors were William Sapcote & Sons Limited. David Trevis-Smith was project director.