



Harris & Pearson Office Building

Leaflet Answers

The following provide a guide to the answers that can be expected from the questions posed on the leaflets. More comprehensive information can be obtained from the web site at www.harrisandpearson.info, from the Dudley Virtual Resource Centre at www.edu.dudley.gov.uk and from the interpretive panel displayed under the arch at the entrance to the Building.

A set of printable photographs (those used on the leaflets) can also be downloaded from the Dudley Virtual Resource Centre.

Leaflet 1

1. What do you think the building was used for?

The Harris & Pearson Office Building was built as offices for the Harris & Pearson Company Firebrick Works. It was used continuously by the Harris & Pearson Company until taken over by Dyson Industries, whose main offices are in Sheffield. Companies within the Dyson Industries group used the building as offices until 1990 when it was abandoned.

2. When was it built?

What evidence have you got?

The building was erected in 1888.

Evidence:

- The information on the leaflet
- The style of the architecture
- A date stone high up on the front of the building
- The interpretive panel inside the archway of the building
- Old maps

3. What do you think it is used for now?

Offices.

4. Why was the building situated in Brettell Lane?

This was the location of the Fire Brick works run by the Harris & Pearson Company. The site was in an ideal location as it was surrounded by all the necessary transport links including the Stourbridge Canal, the Great Western Railway, the Black Country Tram Network and road links via Brettell Lane. The essential raw materials needed for the manufacture of fire bricks, including clay, coal, iron, lime and sand, were also readily accessible as they were all extracted or mined locally and lime kilns were present nearby.

5. What is a Listed Building?

The word 'listing' is a short-hand term used to describe one of a number of legal procedures which help English Heritage to protect the best of our architectural heritage. When buildings are listed they are placed on statutory lists of buildings of 'special architectural or historic interest' compiled by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, on advice from English Heritage.

Listing is not intended to fossilise a building. A building's long-term interests are often best served by putting it to good use, and if this cannot be the one it was designed for, a new use may have to be found. Listing ensures that the architectural and historic interest of the building is carefully considered before any alterations, either outside or inside, are agreed. (www.english-heritage.org.uk, April 2005)

6. Why has this building been restored?

The building has been restored because of:

- a. its history, as a reminder of Fire Brick manufacturing as a major local industry; and
- b. its architecture, as an unusual surviving example of Victorian architectural ceramics.

In 1996 a local resident was concerned and complained to Dudley Council when work was started to demolish the building. The offices had been abandoned for 6 years and the owners were within their rights to demolish. Dudley Council served a Building Preservation Notice and made a successful application to the Government for the building to be added to the statutory list of buildings of 'special architectural or historic interest'. The building was then protected and the owners agreed to transfer ownership to the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust to carry out a restoration project.

More information about how the restoration was made possible and the people involved can be viewed on the Harris & Pearson web site at www.harrisandpearson.info in the 'The Restoration Project' section.

7. Who lived or worked here?

As far as we know no-one lived here – the workers were employees of the Harris and Pearson Company. More information about and by former employees can be viewed on the Harris & Pearson web site at www.harrisandpearson.info in the 'Recollections' section.

8. Why does the building look so grand?

The building is constructed of refractory and polychromatic brickwork and terracotta detailing all made at the Harris & Pearson works from local clay. The building, therefore, was designed to be a prominent three-dimensional advertisement of the Company's products. The building would have been (and still is) a local landmark and its prominence and style would have been intended to reflect the status of the Company.

9. Why is the archway so large at the front?

The archway was the main entrance into the Works so needed to be wide enough to allow large vehicles to pass through. A weighbridge is located under the archway where goods passing in and out would have been weighed and registered in the weighbridge office alongside. The weighbridge mechanism is still in situ although not actually in working order. On a visit to the building you can view this mechanism by operating a time-delay light-switch immediately above the inspection grille.

Leaflet 2

1. What materials were used in the construction of this building?

- Glazed bricks in a variety of colours
- Unglazed bricks
- Iron and steel
- Wood
- Quarry tiles
- Slate
- Clear glass
- Etched glass

2. Why do you think it was built here?

See question 4 above

3. What has happened to the building? Why?

The building became redundant in 1990, was abandoned and fell into disrepair. In 2004-2005 the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and others (see the Harris & Pearson web site at www.harrisandpearson.info for a full list of supporting organisations) carried out a programme of restoration which brought the building back into use as offices.

4. What do you think the building was used for? What do you think it is used for now?

See questions 1, 3 and 4 above

5. Who do you think worked here?

See question 7 above.