

History of Goxhill Control Tower or the Goxhill Brick-Making Industry

In 2003 the Control Tower (Watch Tower for RAF) on Goxhill airfield which was built in early 1941, was demolished and transported to America in Virginia Beach at the Military Aviation Museum, where it is to be reconstructed for its original use controlling preserved airworthy wartime Fighters of its era in flight and house Museum exhibits.

This building was constructed of bricks made within the Parish. The brick making industry at Goxhill goes back something like one-and-a-half centuries with the know-how passed on with each generation of workers. There were seven brickyards here on the banks of the River Humber for two reasons: the supply of clay and the river transport for the products. Before road vehicles were available each had a jetty into the Humber for loading Sloops as the Humber Sailing Barges were called and the bricks could be sent to any ports on the east coast as far away as London. It was the Spreety Barges from the River Thames which came to collect them for the Capital and other towns in the area, also into the rivers that led from the Wash to the towns inland which were situated on these rivers in Lincolnshire and Norfolk. They were also carried inland with sloops up the rivers such as the Trent and Ouse, then further in-land by canals, also up the coast north if need-be. They possibly covered half of England if the orders arrived. Five brickyards were working until 1915 or so, when they had to close down due to the work force volunteering or being conscripted in to the Army during the First War of the 20th century.

It is interesting that several of these brickyards were named after the renowned Gold Rush towns, Klondike and Dawson City. It is believed they were opened for manufacturing at approximately the time the Press printed the news of these Gold Fields, as an old map of the sites in the 1890 era shows only farms and no existing brickyards. The Goldfields rush came at Klondike in 1896 and Dawson City in 1898 so one can expect they were opened around 1900. Then we have number 3, Quebec, which is now known as the Sandtoft Tileries making concrete tiles today. Goxhill Brick Works was founded in 1899 by the Hull brick maker Mr David Goy, who bought a

49-acre field on the south bank of the river Humber in the parish of Goxhill. In 1901 came the erection of a continuous Hoffman Brick Kiln, Chimney, Brick Mill, Drying Sheds and six cottages, brick making commenced and the name of Goy Works was changed to "Quebec" until the 1914 war when production ceased, (the history of the Quebec gold rush covers a period from 1849 to the 1960s) so no-doubt Mr Goy not to be out done for a name with his operation chose the much publicized name of Quebec, to compete with Klondike & Dawson City just up the road.

Quebec was the only yard to open up again after the war when in 1920 a Hull Company acquired this non-productive yard and appointed a manager, Mr George Smith and production of bricks restarted, until he retired in 1926 when Mr A Oldridge was appointed manager with Mr E Lacey as his assistant. In 1932 a second yard was built for making facing bricks and clay roofing tiles, named Goxhill Brickworks Ltd. In 1939 the making of Roof Tiles ceased under the direction of the Ministry of Works since the making of bricks was more essential for the building of air-raid shelters and airfield construction - during the recession of the 1930s unsold stock had piled up to some extent and with the construction of Goxhill airfield and others in Lincolnshire, Goxhill Bricks became an asset to the War Effort as a supply was already there: the Control Tower and most of the other buildings on our airfield were constructed with them..

Briefly Goxhill bricks were made of Clay baked in a kiln fired by coal, controlled by a skilled operator, the correct heat decided by the amount of coal fed in and the control of the air flowing through, combined with the length of time: too hot and they melt into a block or heat too low and time too short they are soft and will disintegrate in face of the weather. When the kiln was filled with bricks for burning, the doorway was sealed with a mixture of Humber mud, sand and cement before the fire was lit, the mixture was called "Pug"..

First, the clay was dug in the winter by hand and wheeled in barrows along planks and tipped into a large square stack so it could weather (mature)