

Report for ‘Spot-listing’ : prepared on behalf of Merseyside Civic Society

Heap’s Rice Mill, Beckwith Street / (Shaws Alley), Liverpool 1

Introduction

In 2004/05, Liverpool City Council, as the Local Planning Authority, was considering proposals that would affect Heap’s Rice Mill. An application for planning permission was submitted for a hotel/residential scheme (Application No. 05F/1707) which included the Rice Mill as the core of the proposal. It was to be adapted accordingly for its proposed new use. This proposal was being considered whilst the milling operation in Beckwith Street was still in partial operation and being transferred to new premises in north Liverpool.

In early 2005, English Heritage considered this combination of mill/warehouse type of building as being specifically designed for a particular use and, over the years of its operation, it has been altered accordingly to accommodate changes as technology improved. During this inspection, and the subsequent checking of records, it would appear that the building was constructed specifically for milling and would have had its own power supply; evidence of this remains.

English Heritage at this time was of the opinion that Heap’s Rice Mill was special by virtue of the fact that their function survives and that it demonstrates the development and adaptation process which is regarded as being of considerable interest.

Background

The Rice Trade:

Early supplies of rice to Europe came from Italy but this changed in the 18th Century to the Carolinas, Bengal and Madras. It was imported into Europe in the form of ‘milled rice’ which was re-milled upon arrival. Re-milling was considered essential because milled rice quickly deteriorated and lost much of its flavour in the overhead holds of badly ventilated ships during long voyages¹.

In the 19th Century, improvements in technology improved the process of separating the husk from the grain without excessive damage. This resulted in the rice being imported in the ‘husk state’ known as ‘Paddy’. Deterioration of the Paddy was very much less as the husk protected the grain.

¹ Cheng, Siok-Hwa, ‘The Rice Industry of Burma 1852 – 1940’,
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012, p8

The process of removing the husk and polishing the rice flourished in London, Liverpool, Bremen and Hamburg.

As a result of the Indian Mutiny, the American Civil War and the Abolition of Slavery, the flow of rice was disrupted. Consequently, the European merchants and millers, in order to keep their businesses and mills working, turned their attention to British based/administered Lower Burma which had a settled government and an expanding level rice production.

One of the earliest accounts of a European rice firm establishing its business in Lower Burma relates to the activities of Messrs Joseph Heap & Sons Ltd². In 1864, this miller, based in Liverpool, sent their own sailing ships (Diamond H Line) to Burma to acquire 1,000 tons of 'Cargo rice' for their mills in Liverpool. Joseph Heap & Sons Ltd soon stationed a company representative in Rangoon.



Other European firms soon followed; Joseph Heap & Sons Ltd led the way and established themselves in four ports, Rangoon, Akyab, Bassien, Moulmien. These large firms (milling & exporting) formed the link connecting the expanding marketable surplus Paddy in Burma to the growing demand for rice in Europe (and other parts of the world).

**Fig. 1 – Extract of an area map:
The Rice Industry of Burma 1852 – 1940, p xxvi**
Source: Cheng, Siok-Hwa

These first rice firms in Burma were European owned and European managed, providing the necessary finance, technology, business skills and enterprise which brought about a change in which Burma's exports, that primarily went to India, were transferred to Europe instead, soon after their arrival³ & ⁴.

² Cheng, Siok-Hwa, 'The Rice Industry of Burma 1852 – 1940', Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012, p9-10

³ In 1845/46 of the 74,000 tons of grain exported from Burma, 6,500 tons (8.78%) went to Europe and 36,000 tons (48.64%) went to India. (Source: British Burma Gazetteer, Vol. 1, 1880, p460)

⁴ In 1870/71 out of the 444,000 tons exported 353,400 tons (79.6%) went to Europe and 23,000 tons (5.18%) went to India. (Source: Report on the Administration of Burma 1873/74, p86)

It was not until the early 1900s, when the Indian and Chinese businessmen came into the picture, that rice exports to Asia began to increase and eventually outstripped the quantity to Europe.

Rice from the field has to go through several milling processes before it is ready for consumption.

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Paddy | rice with the husk intact |
| Husked Rice (or Loonzien) | rice from which the husk only has been removed (the bran layers and the greater part of the germ are retained) |
| Cargo Rice | is a mixture of Loonzien and partially milled rice with up to 20% Paddy |
| Milled Rice | rice from which the husk, most of the bran layers and the greater part of the germ have been removed by powered machinery. At this stage it is ready for consumption |

Rice can be milled to various degrees: 'White Rice' is milled to a high degree, whilst 'Polished Rice' is produced further to improve its appearance by having it polished, glazed and occasionally oiled.

Warehouse Construction:

It is known that, at the time of English Heritage's visit in 2005, the interior was largely a combination of cast and wrought iron, with a nominal use of timber. This construction method is considered to be rare and it is believed that it also reflects the understanding of the potential volatile nature of milling rice, similar to that of milling wheat to produce flour; a huge amount of dust is created.

Warehouse construction at this time was developing and is explained within the English Heritage publication 'Storehouses of Empire'⁵ which forms part of their 'informed conservation' series.

The overall external form of the warehouse changed very little over the course of the 19th century, but changes were being made on the inside and, especially, in relation to their construction due to concerns and fear about fire.

The prevention and even the containment of fire were of vital interest to the Corporation, the owners of various types of warehousing and their insurers. As a consequence, a number of Building Acts were passed to regulate their design which stipulated the use of simple measures to make the warehouses less susceptible to structural failure and the spread of fire.

⁵ Colum Giles & Bob Hawkins, 'Storehouses of Empire: Liverpool's Historic Warehouses', English Heritage, 2004

External and internal walls, floors and timbers were to be of certain thickness, with the internal dividing walls having metal doors to create single compartments to contain any fire that may occur. This also applied to the stairwells, again with metal doors to inhibit the vertical spread of fire through the building (warehouse). The design of the stairwell also aided escape from the building in such emergencies.

The use of cast iron columns was stipulated for the ground floor, combined with an overall height restriction which varied in proportion to the width of the street.

The spread of flames from building to building was to be inhibited by the introduction of parapet and party walls projecting above the roof line. The external features, such as hoists beams, gutters, doors and windows, were required to be of non-combustible materials. In many cases these can be found to be cast or wrought iron.

The Royal Commission for the Historic Monuments of England (RCHME), now part of English Heritage, surveyed Liverpool's surviving warehouses over a period of two years (1997-98) and compiled a detailed gazetteer which emanated from a continuing concern⁶ to evaluate this building type for conservation purposes. The concern was expressed locally, through the City Council's Conservation team, and nationally through English Heritage's listing branch.

It is understood that the Local Planning Authority was advised to use this RCHME report as a working document, should any of these rare structures be the subject of major redevelopment or potential loss.

In the case of Heap's Rice Mill, with the address of its two parts on the site as being Beckwith Street/Shaws Alley/2-8 Upper Pownall Street, (RCHME Address: Site 141 - Beckwith Street), it was recorded in February 1997. (See Appendix I)

Exterior photographs of the building are held at the National Monument Record, Swindon:

| | | |
|------|---------------|---|
| Ref: | AA97/00903/FP | Heap's Rice Mill, Shaws Alley 4:74 from south south east |
| Ref: | AA97/00886/FP | Heap's Rice Mill, Shaws Alley 4:59 from west |
| Ref: | AA97/00902/FP | Heap's Rice Mill, Upper Pownall Street 4:73 from east south east |

All are Original, Photographs (Prints), Photographic Positives

⁶ Liverpool City Planning Department, 'Nineteenth Century Warehouses in Liverpool', (Unpublished Report), Liverpool Heritage Bureau, April 1978

Hutchinson, H.R. 'Historic Warehouses of Liverpool – Their current status, use and future prospects', (Unpublished Dissertation) De Montfort University, August 1997

Context

In 2005, the City Council considered an application for planning permission for hotel/residential scheme. Application No. 05F/1707 included Heap's Rice Mill which was to form the core of the proposal and adapted accordingly for its proposed new use.

At that time English Heritage considered this combination of this particular warehouse type to be specifically designed for its particular use and over the years have been adapted accordingly to accommodate changes as technology improved. Heap's Rice Mill is constructed specifically for milling and as a consequence would have had its own power supply. At the time of English Heritage's inspection there was some remaining evidence of the latter within the existing structures.

English Heritage considered the buildings to be special by the fact that its original function survives and they demonstrate their development too which is of considerable interest. However, whilst being considered to be of special interest, the extent of their survival depends on how much of the existing fabric can be kept and incorporated into any potential redevelopment scheme.

The City Council as the Local Planning Authority in 2005 was of the opinion that this historic mill/warehouse is unique and by its combined scale and size presents a substantial statement of the building type that was once common to this part of the city and was supporting the retention of the external walls and appearance.

However, concern was also being expressed about the extent of the proposed loss of the interior and was advising the applicant that before any redevelopment proposals were advanced, it would be necessary to carry out a full survey of the interior in order to provide a more informed comment.

It is understood that the developers during the course of the discussions assumed that, because of a number of '*believed problems*', the interiors would have to be removed in their entirety, leaving just the façades standing.

In terms of protecting the historic environment this approach would not respect either the character or the fundamental features of the buildings.

The Local Planning Authority was of the opinion that more of the internal features of the buildings could be incorporated into the potential new use as a bespoke hotel in order to express the original use better.

It is understood that this application was to be refused for a number of reasons which are shown in Appendix II, however, the Council's Planning Records show that this Application was withdrawn by the Applicant in August 2005.

Nevertheless, a subsequent submission was made in July 2006 (Application No. 06F/2149); to refurbish, alter and extend former Rice Mill buildings and erect 2 new blocks (5 to 14 storeys) to provide 355 No. apartments and commercial units to be

used within use classes A3, A4, A5 or B1. This was considered by the LPA and, on 30 November 2006, planning permission was granted for the proposed development, in accordance with the application, subject to the compliance with a number of specified conditions.

This approval expired on 30 November 2009.

However, it should be noted that, in Condition 25 attached to the approval, the developer was required to give English Heritage (Architectural Investigation Section) one month's notice in writing of the proposed commencement of work to which this consent relates and to allow English Heritage (Architectural Investigation Section) access to the building(s).

(English Heritage's "Final Notice of Demolition (Form Stat E)" was attached to the approval).

REASON: In order to ensure that every opportunity is given to properly record the building(s) before works commence.

Analysis

In 2005, the interior was in relatively good condition as the business in the Beckwith Street/Shaws Alley buildings had scaled down as part of the process of moving to new premises.



Photographs of the exterior taken in 2005 at the time of the visit by English Heritage's listing inspectors and showing the building in use and in a relatively fair condition Fig 2.

Fig 2 – Heap's Rice Mill viewed from Park Lane (2005)
Source: DG Marsden

Figures 2-5 show the interior during the English Heritage inspection in January 2005

Notable features are the iron plate floor, the method of interlocking the cast iron columns and the brick arches springing off the iron beams with wrought iron ties (a detailed first used by Jesse Hartley).



**Fig 3 –
Underside of
iron plate floor
on iron joists**
Source: Liverpool City
Council



**Fig 4 – Method of clamping cast iron
beams to the supporting cast iron
columns**
Source: Liverpool City Council



**Fig 5 – Cast iron columns
supporting with brick arch
springing from the cast iron
beams and wrought iron ties
preventing spread.**
Source: Liverpool City Council



Fig 6 – Heap’s Rice Mill viewed form Park Lane (2013)

Source: DG Marsden

Fig 6 shows the exterior of the building, taken from virtually the same point in March 2013. The building (now vacant) is suffering from neglect. The upper parts of the outer walls are showing signs of severe ingress of water (note the extent of the damp masonry), together with a profusion of buddleia growth which clearly indicates that the rainwater goods are in need of attention. This amount of vegetation growth, which has substantially grown over the summer of 2013, will be undermining the structural stability of the high level masonry.

Photographs, posted on the internet⁷ in respect of the condition of the interior warehouses, clearly show the deterioration that is occurring.

Conclusion

This is an important building in terms of its historic importance to both Liverpool and its connection with Rangoon, Akyab, Bassien and Moulmien in Lower Burma.

The building was in use up to the beginning of 2005 and in relatively good condition.

Under the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012, the former Rice Mill is considered to be an asset that has a level of significance worthy of formal protection as it is comparable in its construction to others recognised by English

⁷ Web-links:

<http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/forums/industrial-sites/57317-heap-sons-rice-mill-liverpool-jan-11-a.html>

<http://nwex.co.uk/showthread.php?t=4190>

Heritage and demonstrates how the building was carefully adapted during its working life to meet the demands of the production of rice.

Statutory protection should not be seen as a hindrance but as an advantage to bring such an important building back into beneficial use within this developing part of the City immediately to the south of the Liverpool ONE retail area and Albert Dock Conservation Area. The building lies within the buffer zone of the inscribed World Heritage Site.

Using the advice set out in the ‘Informed Conservation Series’ on Warehouses, published jointly by English Heritage and Liverpool City Council, its conversion and adaptation can be achieved without seriously affecting the original fabric.

However, it is accepted that some alterations to the former Rice Mill will be required but these should be discussed and agreed as part of any pre-application discussion with the Local Planning Authority and English Heritage before formal applications are lodged with the City Council for formal consideration.

The City Council, as the Local Planning Authority, has not compiled a ‘local list’ of undesignated assets but it is understood that, within the emerging Local Plan for Liverpool, regard will be given to the protection of non-designated heritage assets, as set out in the City’s Draft Core Strategy Submission Document (currently suspended), should Heap’s Rice Mill not meet the relevant selection requirements for being added to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

At present, there are no known local requests submitted to the City Council to designate the building as an ACV (Asset of Community Value) under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011.



Extract from the Historic Environment Record for Heap's Rice Mill

Source: RCHME Report 1998

Liverpool Historic Warehouse Survey : Documentation

Address Beckwith Street/Shaws Alley/2-8 Upper Pownall Street
(RCHME address 141 Beckwith St.)

| Site No | NBR No | HH No | NGR SJ |
|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|
| 141 | - | 4.58/4.59 | 3456 8968 |

Date supplied by RCHME

Maps

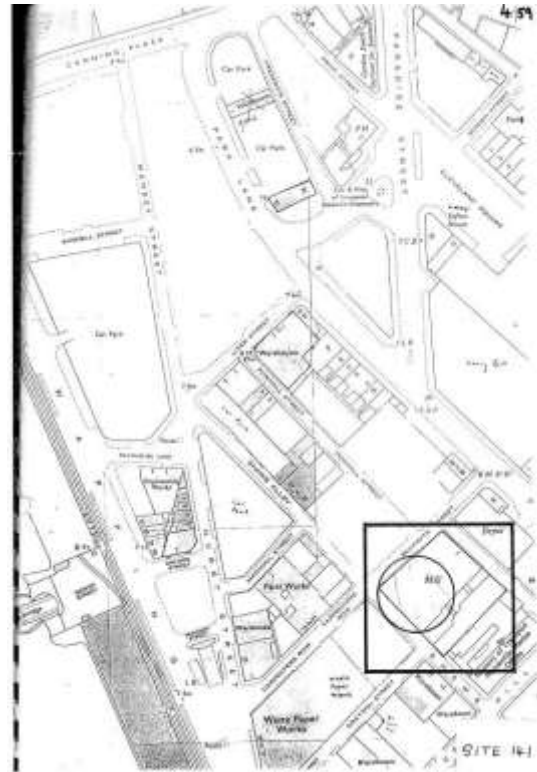
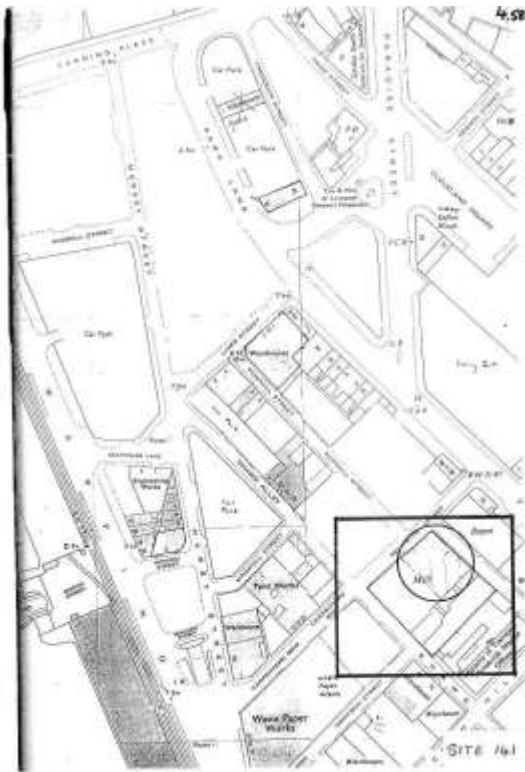
| Date | Scale | Reference | Survey/ Revision | Notes |
|------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---|
| 1927 | 25" | OS Lancs Sheet 106.14 | 1924 (R) | Undivided block 'Rice Mill' |
| 1908 | 25" | OS Lancs Sheet 106.14 | 1906 (R) | As 1927 |
| 1891 | 1:500 | OS Lancs Sheet 106.14.17 | 1890 (S) | As 1908; large-scale shows more clearly the distinct 'kink' on Beckwith St. side. |
| 1850 | 5': 1 mile | OS Liverpool Sheet 34 | 1848 (S) | 'Similar area; 3 divisions shown |
| 1836 | 19 5/8"; 1 mile | M A Gage | - | Different lay-out - 'Foundry' |

Directories of Liverpool (Gore's/Kelly's)

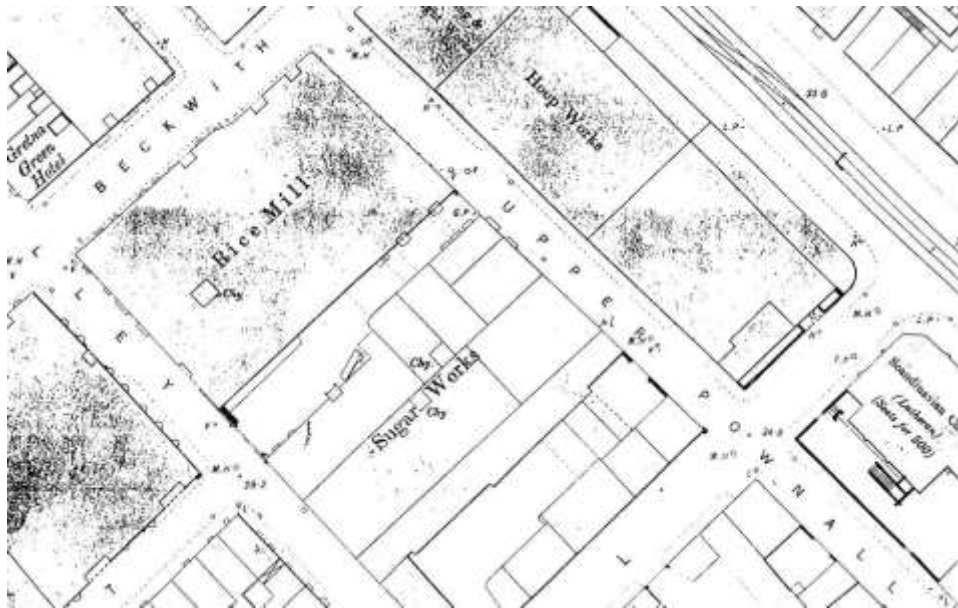
| Date | Details |
|------|--|
| 1968 | A p.49 Beckwith St. - no numbers listed |
| | A p.599 Upper Pownall St - '2/8 Heap Joseph & Sons Ltd rice millers' |
| | B p.949 'Heap Joseph & Sons Ltd. rice, grain & barley millers 2 The Temple, 24 Dale st. 2 ... mills Upper Pownall st 1 ...' |
| 1949 | A p.837 Upper Pownall St '2 to 8 Heap Joseph & Sons Ltd. rice millers' |
| | B p.1230 'Heap Jsph & Sons Ltd. rice, grain and barley millers 2 The Temple 24 Dale st 2 ... mills, Upper Pownall st. 1 ...' |
| 1928 | A p.50 Beckwith St 'Heap Joseph & Sons, Ltd. rice millers' |
| | B p.1042 'Heap Jsph. & Sons Ltd. rice millers 2 The Temple 24 Dale st W - rice mills 2, 4, 6 & 8 lrp. Pownall st W; Shaw's alley W and Beckwith st Park la. W' |
| 1908 | A p.48 Beckwith St 'Heap Joseph & Sons rice millers |
| | B p.1076 '... merchants & rice millers 2 The Temple 24 Dale st - rice mills 2 to 8 Upper Pownall st Shaw's alley and Beckwith st, Park lane, W.' |

Liverpool Historic Warehouse Survey : Documentation

- 1888 A p.837 Beckwith St. '5 Heap Joseph & Son's [sic] warehouse'
- B p.333 'Heap Joseph and Sons sugar refiners rice millers and shipowners 2 The Temple 24
Dale st -sugar house Beckwith st. - rice mills 2 to 8 Upper Pownall st. W'
- 1868 A p.611 Beckwith St 'Heap Joseph and Sons rice millers'



Extract from the c. 1980 Ordnance Survey
Source: RCHME report 1998



Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1:500
Lancashire Sheet 106.14.17 Surveyed 1890 Published 1891
Source: RCHME Report 1998

Draft Conditions of Refusal in relation to Application No. 05F/1707

Source: Liverpool City Council

1. The proposed development, by reason of its design, height of the 25 storey tower its layout and uses would:
 - (a) form an over dominant feature both within the local street scene and when viewed from more distant perspectives;
 - (b) fail to deliver a scheme that properly and comprehensively addresses the full extent of the potential development site in a manner that would complement and respect the existing urban grain of the area and would not prejudice future development of adjoining land not included in the application boundary;
 - (c) fail to provide adequate and workable access and egress arrangements for service vehicles to the detriment of traffic management and highway safety; (d) be contrary to the following policies of the Liverpool Unitary Development Plan: HD18 (General Design Requirements) and the related Liverpool Urban Design Guide, T8 (Traffic Management), T9 (Road Safety)

2. The Council, in partnership with Liverpool Vision has engaged consultants to develop an Action Plan and Implementation Framework to guide future development and investment in the Baltic Triangle area that includes the application site. The whole area is currently zoned in the Liverpool Unitary Development Plan (UDP) for industrial purposes and both the Council and Liverpool Vision wish to consider a more flexible mixed use re-zoning. The work undertaken by the consultants and its outputs are intended to inform and guide the production of the Liverpool Local Development Framework (LDF) including either or both the broad spatial policies of the LDF Core Strategy and a potential statutory area action plan development plan document. As the proposed development is contrary to the current allocation of the site within the UDP, and in the absence of a revised policy framework the application is premature and prejudicial to the outcome of the policy review, particularly bearing in mind the proposed development is primarily for residential purposes. In the present circumstances, the development would not act as a catalyst for the comprehensive redevelopment of the area for industrial or business purposes and would represent piecemeal development that would prejudice the long term development of the area primarily for business or industrial uses, contrary to Policy E1 (Primarily Industrial Areas) of the Liverpool Unitary Development Plan.

3. The applicant has not demonstrated in an acceptable way that the proposals conform to the spatial, regeneration and housing policies specified in Regional Planning Guidance 13 (which now forms part of the Development Plan). The policies in RPG 13 are given local expression in the adopted Supplementary Planning Document for Housing (November 2004). In this regard the applicant has failed to show that the proposed development complies with Policy Statement H3 in that no satisfactory demonstration has been submitted to show that the development site contains any non viable uses or that the development would rectify an identifiable problem of vacant or significantly under-used land or buildings. Since the adopted Unitary Development Plan allocation stipulates industrial and not residential development the local planning authority considers that there are no over-riding regeneration benefits accruing from the proposals and that agreement to a scheme of this scale could set a precedent resulting in a cumulative impact which may undermine the objectives of the HMRI.