

NEWSLETTER



JOHNSON POOLE AND BLOOMER GOES BACK FOR THE FUTURE

Johnson Poole and Bloomer (JPB) has moved into new office premises. JPB has purchased the Harris and Pearson building on Brettell Lane, Brierley Hill and on the 9th May 2009 the firm moved into this historic building and local landmark. The Harris and Pearson Building was built as offices in 1888 for the surrounding firebrick works. Now a Grade 2 listed building it is a well known local landmark. The remarkable front elevation is constructed of refractory and polychromatic brickwork and terra cotta detailing, all made at the works from local clay. Access to the works at the rear of the building was through the central arch and the original weighbridge is still present in the floor, beneath the arch.



Company Director Tony Johnson says "It was important for JPB to purchase and move into this beautiful old building because the firms of Johnson Poole and Bloomer and Harris and Pearson have had close ties throughout their history. Built by the Harris & Pearson Company in 1888, the offices are a splendid and permanent advertisement of the quality of their products. Every brick was made at the works from the local Stourbridge fireclay. A typical 19th century Black Country firebrick works required local mineral reserves and Johnson Poole & Bloomer, founded in 1844, represented them as their Mineral Surveyor at that time and has been associated with the firm and the building ever since the late 1800's. This historic connection made the acquisition of this particular Grade II Listed building a must for our Company. Now fully restored to its former glory, thanks to the dedication and determination of the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust, the building features a variety of architectural ceramics, including both glazed and unglazed materials in a variety of colours, patterned quarry tile floors, and an original Victorian weighbridge."

George Pearson and Peter Harris formed their partnership in 1852 when they acquired the lease of the Old Side Works in Amblecote and in 1872 they acquired the lease for a further 9 acres of land from the Earl of Dudley where they opened the New Side Works. It was here in 1888 that they built the offices now known as the Harris and Pearson Building. The Harris and Pearson Works on Brettell Lane continued throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries until production came to an end in 1968, although sales continued from there for two more years. However, the Casting Department continued to occupy the office building until the 1980's when the Silver End Works closed.

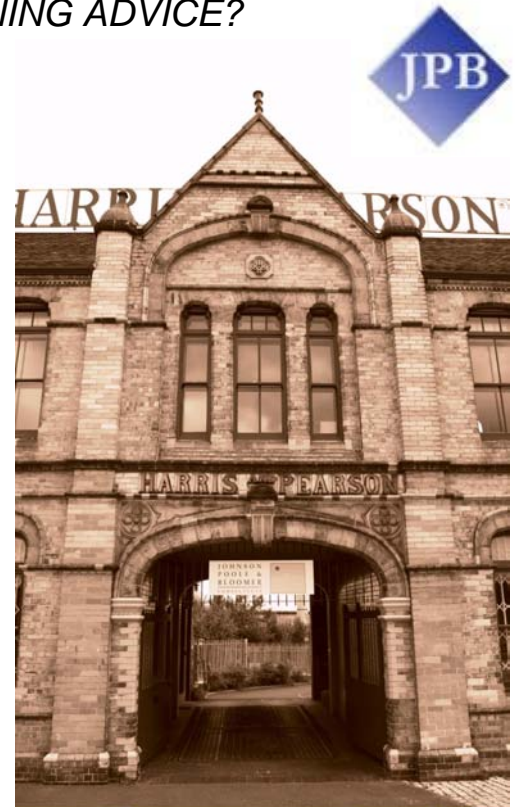
Henry Johnson, an eminent geologist and surveyor, established the Black Country firm in 1844. Henry's father John worked as a bailiff for Lord Dudley on his Himley estate and it is likely that Henry spent many of his boyhood days there helping his father, which gave him a taste for surveying work. Henry served his apprenticeship with a respected local land and mine surveyor called John Brettell before founding his own firm in 1844 and until the recent past, JPB has carried out work both for Harris & Pearson and their sister company, E.J. & J. Pearson, who also occupied the office building at one time.

"Our archives contain several exciting examples of the work we have done for E.J. & J. Pearson together with diary references to Harris & Pearson" Tony Johnson recalls. (see overleaf)

See our web page for all our contact details: www.jpbc.co.uk

DID HENRY EVER GIVE GEORGE EXPERT MINING ADVICE?

Johnson Poole and Bloomer's archives contain a wealth of old books, maps, documents and many other interesting artefacts. Among them are hundreds of old mines records, some dating back to the early 19th century, long before it was a legal requirement to keep records of mines. The records cover many parts of the United Kingdom and include not only records of past coal mining but also limestone, ironstone, fireclay and salt mines. Many of the records are unique, but it was the records of coal and fireclay mines in the Brierley Hill area that were of particular interest to us and whether we would find a connection between JPB and Harris and Pearson. The archive also contains the diaries of our founder, Henry Johnson. Henry kept a diary for each year of his working life and many of them are still held in the archive. The diaries paint a picture of Victorian life in the Black Country and are a remarkable record of the working life of a very remarkable man, so we looked through them to find if there was any link between Henry and Harris and Pearson. Our researches were quickly rewarded with a wealth of entries recording business dealings with Harris & Pearson and E J & J Pearson. However, these were not Henry's diary but from Henry's son's (also called Henry). An entry for the 12th March 1895 says "Saw Mr. Pearson Snr & Jnr at Brettell Lane Station" but there are many other entries recording meetings at the offices of Harris and Pearson.



HENRY JOHNSON JNR'S DIARY MONDAY, 31 DECEMBER 1894'

"Ex'ors of Pearson

To Brierley Hill and interview with Mr. Thomas by arrangement.

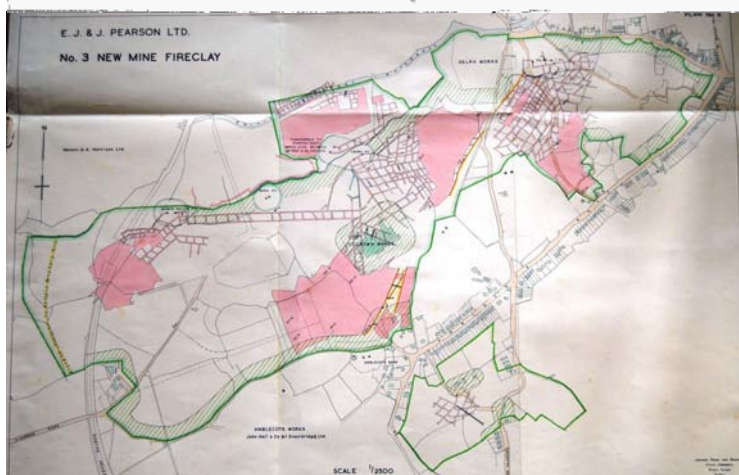
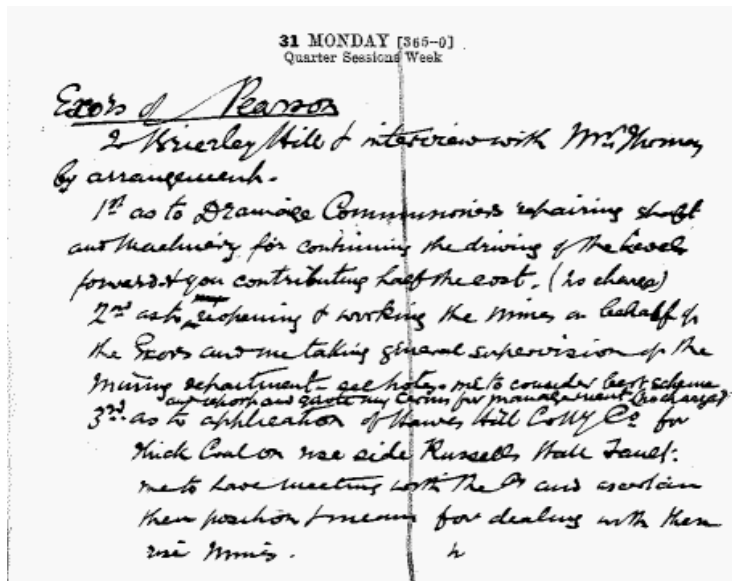
1st as to Drainage Commissioners repairing shaft and machinery for continuing the driving of the level forward and you contributing half the cost. (no charge)

2nd as to reopening and working the mine on behalf of the Exors and me taking general supervision of the Mining Department. - see notes. Me to consider best scheme and report and quote my costs for management. (no charge).

3rd as to Hawes Hill Colliery Co for Thick Coal on rise side Russells Hall Fault: me to have meeting with them and ascertain their position and means for dealing with these rise mines."

Ex'ors' or 'Exors' refers to Executors, probably of the estate of John Pearson, George's eldest brother and co-founder of E.J. & J. Pearson, whose probate took over 20 years to settle.

There are many subsequent entries in Henry Jnr's diaries, particularly in 1895, to works to re-open Pearson Colliery. There are records of a Pearson Colliery located in Old Hill, but John Pearson owned many mines in the area and it will need further research to establish the precise location of the mine Henry Jnr refers to. A John William Thomas was the son-in-law of John's brother William and he became a Partner in the firm of E.J. & J. Pearson.



The map above is an extract from JPB's mine archive showing the underground mines of E J & J Pearson, in the No.3 New Mine Fireclay seam. These records were made by JPB in 1957.