

PAST TIMES
The Brick and Tile Works.
Lodges Road – Seaton Ross

Brick making has been carried out in Britain since Roman times. In clay areas such as Seaton Ross, bricks were made on a very local scale with many a village and estates having its own brick works – Seaton Ross was no exception. In fact, on the August 1814 plan of Seaton Ross Common and Carr by John Foster, a sand pit covering a three acre site is shown on Lodges Road (now York Road) which indicates that brick making was probably carried out on this site in the early 19 century and possibly even earlier.

Brick making had been in existence at Seaton Ross for many years and records show that in the early 19th century the brick and tile works were situated on Lodges Road almost opposite Dial Hall. Early records from the 19th century show that in 1841 William Russell was the brick and tile maker living and working at the brick works in Seaton Ross with his brother, Henry assisting him. There was much rebuilding during the early 19th century and it is almost certain that the bricks for this came from the local brick works in Seaton Ross.

Before 1850, the hand made brick were a smaller size 8¼x4x2½ inches, and evidence of these bricks still remain by looking at many of the older houses in Seaton Ross today; which clearly indicate they were either built or rebuilt from local hand made bricks.

By 1851, John Fawcett was the new owner of the brick works in partnership with William Brittain. They employed 3 men and brick making was a thriving business at this time. They remained in business until the early 1870's. In 1871, George Henry Ogle from Melbourne took over the brick works at Seaton Ross employing George Collins as his manager. George Ogle also owned the brick works at Melbourne and for many years lived at Plantation, Seaton Ross with his wife Anne and their three young children. The manager of the brick works lived in one of the two cottages on the site with the other cottage occupied by a worker. In 1891, John Lawley was the foreman/manager living in one of the cottages with the labourer John Smith living in the other. By the 1890's George Henry Ogle had moved back to Melbourne living at Sugar Island. John Lawley continued to work at the brick works and in 1901 is mentioned as brick and tile worker aged 71! He was assisted by Samuel Fenton aged 63, who lived at Boundary Cottage.

George Ogle extended the business and in addition to brick and tile making, he also made and manufactured drain and sanitary pipes. A bill heading from March 1893 shows that George Ogle made and supplied 30000x3 inch pipes at a cost of £6. 0s. 0d. for a customer at Shiptonthorpe.

The Victorians fell in love with brick; the railways enabled them to transport them all over the country, and it rapidly became cheaper to use mass-produced bricks from elsewhere than to produce them by hand locally. So all over the country harsh red bricks began to dominate, ousting even the local bricks that had reflected the nature of the land from which the clay was dug.

This resulted in the demise of the making of local hand made bricks. The brick works at Seaton Ross continued to operate until after the first world war and sadly closed in the early 1920's – the buildings and cottages on the site being demolished many years ago. Another local craft had gone and the industrial mass-produced red brick had taken over.

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