

Calico Printing Works, Garratt Lane, Wandsworth

These works were situated on the east bank of the Wandle, a little way upstream from Adkins Mill, and about 450 yards south of the present Mapleton Road.

They were said to have been established as a bleaching ground by Richard Pillett in 1657 [1]. He died in 1673 and by his will proved on 17 October 1673 he directed his wife Anne and son Richard to "carry on my trade of whitening linnen cloth during the term of my lease of the said whiteing ground" [2].

By the 1720s Martin Newport, a scarlet dyer, was the occupier of the premises. He was declared bankrupt in July 1725 [3], but in September 1725 it was announced that the Commission of Bankrupt was superseded [4], and he carried on working there until his death in 1729. He bequeathed his estate to his wife Penelope [5], and she insured the dyehouse and its appurtenances with the Hand in Hand insurance company on 28 January 1735/6 [6]. The policy was assigned to John Page on 7 March 1736/7.

John Page was a calico printer who had held the lease of other land in Wandsworth since before 1731, and he converted the dyeworks to his purposes. He renewed the insurance policy on 12 January 1742/3 [7], again on 9 January 1749/50 [8], and for the last time on 20 January 1757 [9], and would appear to have ceased working there in 1760.

On 19 February 1762, the premises were insured by Edmund Farmer and James Plank [10]. This policy was assigned solely to James Plank on 16 June 1767. He died in 1771 and administration of his estate was granted to his widow Hannah on 5 July 1771 [11].

On 29 July 1772 the insurance policy was renewed by Hannah Plank and Thomas Hatcher, a calico printer with whom she was briefly in partnership [12]. There was a reference to the bleaching grounds of Plank and Hatcher at Wandsworth in 1779 [13], but soon afterwards Hatcher moved to calico printing works at Ravensbury, Mitcham. His place was taken by Hannah's son James Plank junior, and they jointly renewed the insurance policy on 17 April 1782 [14].

Hannah Plank had died or retired before 3 July 1788 when James Plank renewed the insurance policy in his name only [15]. James Edwards, writing at about this date, noticed on the site "a genteel house, just built by Mr. Plank, who carries on a manufactory in the callico line" [16]. Plank renewed the policy again on 1 July 1795, when it was noted in the policy register that the premises were in the occupation of Charles Brown, but this had been deleted, and the name "Gedge" substituted [17].

This was evidently a reference to William and Joseph Gedge, linen drapers with premises in Leicester Square, London. They had taken over the calico printing works by 25 December 1798, when they insured them with another company, the Sun. The buildings covered included a steam engine house, copper plate shop, calender house, sour house, dyehouse, and storehouse [18]. They dissolved their partnership on 1 July 1802 [19], and William Gedge then carried on alone. He renewed the Sun policy on 5 February 1803 [20], but on 1 June 1804 he was declared bankrupt [21]. Joseph Gedge seems to have retained some interest in the business, and he renewed the policy on 21 September 1808, when the premises were said

to be "now untenanted" [22]. Apparently Joseph Gedge was having financial difficulties also, for the last policy was assigned to his mortgagees, "as per Indenture dated Sept. 27, 1808".

It seems likely that the next tenants were Thomas Bartlett and Benjamin West, calico printers, who were declared bankrupt in November 1810 [23]. By direction of their assignees, the lease of their "extensive Calico-Grounds and valuable Plant" was advertised to be offered for sale at an auction to be held on 22 March 1811 [24].

A "Calico-printing Manufactory, with all the utensils" was advertised to be let, in April 1812, and although the location was not given, it seems likely that it applied to these premises [25]. Likewise a further announcement, of an auction to be held on the premises in Garratt Lane on 22 October 1812, of the "valuable plant, utensils and stock of a calico printer" [26].

The position regarding the tenancy during the next few years has not been ascertained. James Plank had evidently retained the head lease of the premises, for after his death early in 1820, the executors of his will arranged for it to be advertised that the property would be let by tender, offers to be delivered by 15 June 1820. This was said to comprise 13 acres of meadow and garden ground, an extensive manufactory, a dwelling house, millhouse, stables, and other buildings, "lately occupied for the business of a calico printer" [27], implying that the premises were then unoccupied.

The sub-lease may then have been taken by Charles Pyne and John Aldridge, "printers, dyers and calenderers", who dissolved their partnership on 7 May 1825 [28]. It would seem that they both carried on at the works, on their separate accounts. They were individually declared bankrupt a few years later, Charles Pyne on 26 January 1828 [29], and John Aldridge on 6 March 1828 [30].

In July 1828 it was announced that, by direction of the assignees of Charles Pyne, the "net rental" of the premises would be offered for sale at an auction to be held on 10 July 1828 [31]. No acceptable offers were then received, and a further auction of the rental was advertised to be held on 22 August 1828 [32].

The following year it was announced that some of the plant and utensils at the works, including "130 engraved half-quarter plates, of new and elegant patterns", and "various useful effects connected with the calico printing business" would be offered for sale at an auction to be held on the premises in Garratt Lane on 18 August 1829, "under a Levy Warrant" [33].

In May 1832 it was advertised that, following the bankruptcy of the owners of the freehold of the property, Messrs. Duckett, Morland and Bernard, their assignees had arranged for the premises to be sold at an auction to be held on 3 July 1832. The premises were said to be comprised of "a substantially brick-erected calico printing factory, containing a plate and two block shops, mill, drug and colour house, and a 2-horse stable", together with a family residence, several tenements and 34 acres of meadow land. The estate was let on lease which would expire in 1841 [34].

In the book of reference to a Deposited Plan dated 29 November 1834 [35], the name of the owner was given as John Fielder, who had presumably bought the freehold at the auction in 1832. The occupier was named as John Davidson, but the information must have been compiled earlier, for John Davidson, and his partner John Davis, silk and calico printers of Garratt Lane, Wandsworth were jointly declared bankrupt on 1 October 1834 [36].

Soon afterwards, by order of their assignees, the 61-year lease of the premises, with the use of the plant, was advertised to be on offer at an auction to be held on 29 October 1834. In the auction notice the property was described thus:

"The premises are particularly adapted for a calico-printer, in which business they have been employed for a series of years, and comprise silk and cotton copper houses, drying mounts, blue and colour houses, block rooms, block printers' copper plate printing, drawing and cutting shops, spacious yard, stabling, dwelling house and four acres of meadow land." [37]

It is not clear exactly what happened on the site subsequently. The "remaining stock" was advertised to be sold by auction on the premises on 1 March 1838 [38], and later in that year the Wandsworth Tithe Map book of reference described the premises as a "manufactory" in the occupation of Thomas Pullen, Blundell and Company. This firm was presumably Henry Blundell, William Spence, Joseph Blundell, and Robert Henry Spence, who were described in January 1840 as patent candle and oil manufacturers in Garratt Lane [39].



The pepper mill in 1838
[97.1kb]

The freehold of this "patent candle factory" was advertised to be offered for sale by auction to be held on 29 April 1846. It was said in the notice that most of the "valuable plant and machinery for the manufacture of composition wax and stearine candles, and for refining oil" had been installed within the last few months [40], so the works probably continued in operation for several years.

Eventually, the site was included within the premises of the neighbouring paper mill, after that had been acquired by William and James McMurray in 1854. The paper mill buildings had been taken over by Benham and Sons, engineers, by 1914, and they gradually demolished the old buildings and built new ones on the northern part of the site. The site of the candle factory was occupied by 1932 by the Veritas Incandescent Mantle Works, which was in production until 1972.

References

1. Dorian Gerhold, *Wandsworth Past* (1998), p. 43.
2. National Archives, PROB 11/343 q130.
3. *The London Gazette*, 3-6 July 1725.
4. *Ibid.* 7-11 September 1725.
5. National Archives, PROB 11/670 q78.
6. Guildhall Library, MS 8674/51, p. 168.
7. *Ibid.* MS 8674/63, p. 173.
8. *Ibid.* MS 8674/75, p. 99.
9. *Ibid.* MS 8674/87, p. 258.
10. *Ibid.* MS 8674/97, p. 46.
11. National Archives, PROB 6/147 p. 87.
12. Guildhall Library, MS 8674/113, p. 239.
13. London Metropolitan Archives, SKCS 48.
14. Guildhall Library, MS 8674/125, p. 167.
15. *Ibid.* MS 8674/130, p. 318.
16. James Edwards, *Companion from London to Brighthelmston*, Part 2 (c. 1789), p. 14.

- 17.** Guildhall Library, MS 8674/135, p. 358.
- 18.** Ibid. MS 11937/26, No. 685356.
- 19.** The London Gazette, 12-16 October 1802.
- 20.** Guildhall Library, MS 11937/53, No. 744490.
- 21.** The London Gazette, 29 May-2 June 1804.
- 22.** Guildhall Library, MS 11937/80, No. 820654.
- 23.** The London Gazette, 13-17 November 1810.
- 24.** The Times, 18 March 1811.
- 25.** Ibid. 17 April 1812.
- 26.** Ibid. 15 October 1812.
- 27.** Ibid. 27 May 1820.
- 28.** The London Gazette, 10 May 1825.
- 29.** Ibid. 29 January 1828.
- 30.** Ibid. 1 April 1828.
- 31.** The Times, 7 July 1828.
- 32.** Ibid. 22 August 1828.
- 33.** Ibid. 13 August 1829.
- 34.** Ibid. 26 May 1832.
- 35.** Surrey History Centre, QS6/8/164.
- 36.** The London Gazette, 3 October 1834.
- 37.** The Times, 18 October 1834.
- 38.** Ibid. 26 February 1838.
- 39.** Wandsworth Local History Library, West Brixton Justices of the Peace Minute Book 1839-40.
- 40.** The Times, 8 April 1846.