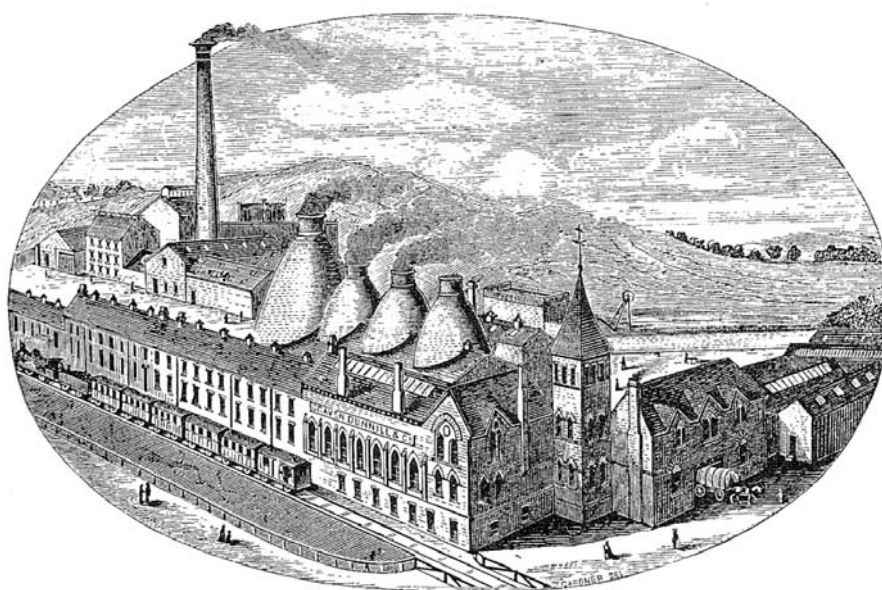


Jackfield TILE MUSEUM

The Jackfield Tile Museum is housed in the former factory of Craven Dunnill Ltd. Completed in 1874, the factory was one of the premier sites in Great Britain for the manufacture of decorative floor and wall tiles, architectural ceramics and Art Pottery. The firm employed no more than a hundred staff but secured markets for its products all over the British Empire. Craven Dunnill stopped manufacturing in the early 1950s, selling the Jackfield factory to a firm producing iron and bronze castings. It wasn't until 2000, that Craven Dunnill started to make specialist tiles again when the firm moved back to its old works as a tenant of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.



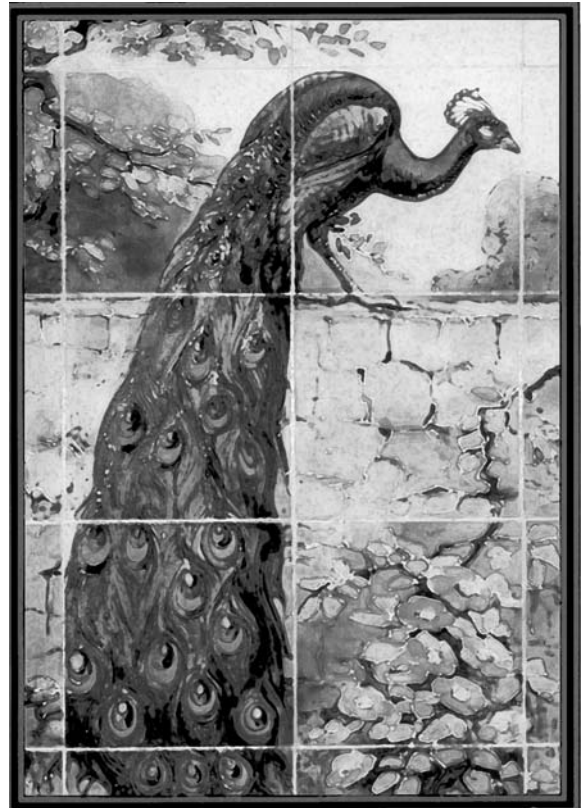
The Jackfield factory was acquired by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum in 1983 to house its collection of thousands of decorative tiles manufactured by all the most significant British tile firms from all over the country, eg Mintons in Staffordshire, Carters in Dorset, Maw & Co., in Shropshire and Godwins in Herefordshire. The majority of tiles in the collection date from the period 1840 to 1940 and are displayed individually or in room settings. Videos give all visitors an understanding of the most important manufacturing and decorating techniques.

Encaustic tiles were made by pressing different coloured clays into the surface of a tile to produce a hard-wearing floor tile. On most wall tiles the decoration was achieved using different coloured glazes. Craven Dunnill still make tiles in the traditional way for all sorts of clients and examples of its products can be purchased in the Museum shop. The Peacock encaustic floor in the entrance, an exact copy of one made in Jackfield in 1907 for the Mysore Palace in India, was made by the firm in 2004.

A Brief Tour

The first gallery visitors enter is dark and mysterious, giving just a glimpse of Jackfield village's history before the nineteenth century. Until then the economy was reliant on the nearby River Severn, but during the Victorian period, most local people were involved in making of bricks, roofing tiles or floor and wall tiles. When Maw & Co. opened its new factory in Jackfield in 1883, it was the largest decorative tile works in the world. (The remains are now a crafts centre).

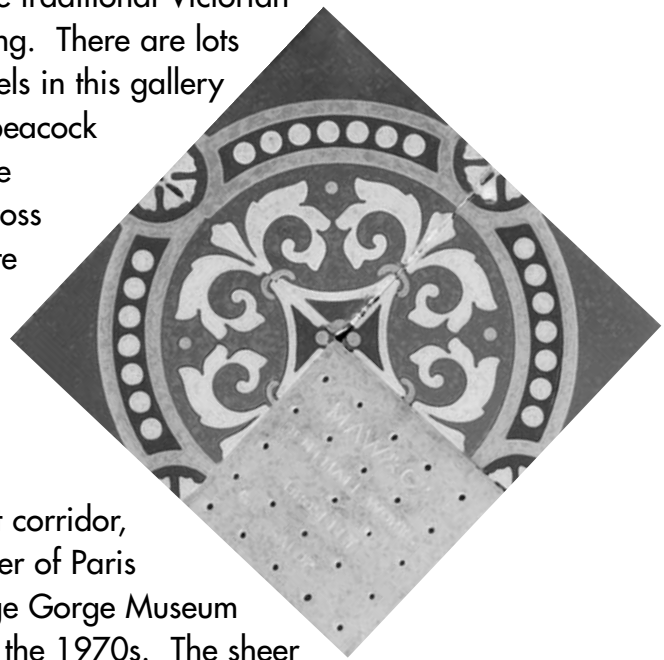
Up the tiled stairs, visitors turn right to enter the Trade Showroom and the Victorian offices of the original Craven Dunnill factory. From there they go into the Design Studio with its impressive arched windows. Now called the Style Gallery, tiles are displayed in here according to artistic styles, eg Gothic, Aesthetic, Art Deco, etc. Don't miss the Director's tiled washroom!



From the Style Gallery visitors enter a series of amazing tiled rooms. A replicated section of Covent Garden railway station on the Piccadilly line of the London Underground is followed by a Butcher's Shop with tiling from Ripon in Yorkshire and Rochdale in Lancashire. Around the corner is an impressive display of encaustic tiles assembled as though in a Gothic Revival Church of England memorial chapel of the 1860s complete with stained glass and organ music.

Visitors then walk over a Craven Dunnill encaustic floor of the late 1870s and into a typical 1930's suburban front room incorporating a fireplace with colourful jousting Mediaeval knights. Immediately beyond this room is a corner of a public house with tiled walls and a stunning replica of a ceramic bar front made by Craven Dunnill at the beginning of the twentieth century. Opposite are two walls of 1920s tiles made by Carters and rescued from the Middlesex Hospital in London, one showing people dancing around a Maypole the other a scene with a merry-go-round or carousel. Before leaving these rooms, visitors see a section of Victorian bathroom which not only has a tiled floor and walls, but also a real mosaic ceiling!

In the next part of the Museum, the Long Gallery, visitors can see videos of tiles being made and decorated using three traditional Victorian techniques: encaustic; dust-pressing; tube-lining. There are lots of beautiful individual tiles as well as tile panels in this gallery as well. Of particular note is the tube-lined peacock dating from the 1930s and the impressive late nineteenth century tile frieze from Charing Cross Hospital, London which occupies one complete wall. The frieze is presented like a tapestry with Mediaeval characters some on horse-back others on foot all hunting for rabbits and deer with their dogs.



Through the glass screen and on into the next corridor, visitors can see the hundreds of original plaster of Paris patterns and moulds rescued by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum from the abandoned Maw & Co tile works in the 1970s. The sheer number of these plasters is just one indication as to why the firm was once the largest and most productive in the world.

From the Long Gallery, visitors descend to the ground floor, the route continuing through Craven Dunnill's current manufacturing areas and back into the entrance. All that remains then is to take refreshments in the café and purchase a souvenir of the visit!

