

## Heap's Rice Mill

### Beckwith Street / (Shaws Alley), Liverpool 1

#### Introduction

In 2004/05 the Merseyside Civic Society (MCS) became aware that Liverpool City Council as the Local Planning Authority was in the process of considering proposals that would affect Heap's Rice Mill.

An application<sup>1</sup> for planning permission was submitted for a hotel/residential scheme which included the Rice Mill at its core. The rice mill buildings were to be adapted accordingly for its proposed new use.

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 they have been altered accordingly to accommodate changes as technology improved. During the course of their 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 the Heap's Rice Mill buildings to be special by the fact their function survives and that the complex demonstrates the development and adaptation process that has taken place was regarded as being of considerable interest.

#### Background

##### The Rice Trade:

Early supplies of rice to Europe came from Italy but this changed in the C18 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 voyages<sup>2</sup>.

In the C19 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.

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

---

<sup>1</sup> Application No. 05F/1707

<sup>2</sup> Cheng, Siok-Hwa, 'The Rice Industry of Burma 1852 – 1940', Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012, p8

their businesses and mills working, turned their attention to British based/administered Lower Burma which had a settled government and an expanding rice production.

One of the earliest accounts of a European rice firm establishing its business in Lower Burma was Messrs Joseph Heap & Sons Ltd<sup>3</sup>. 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 was transferred to Europe instead soon after their arrival<sup>4 & 5</sup>.

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 which 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)

<sup>3</sup> Cheng, Siok-Hwa, 'The Rice Industry of Burma 1852 – 1940', Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012, p9-10

<sup>4</sup> 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)

<sup>5</sup> 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)

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 & Wrought Iron with a nominal use of Timber. This construction method is considered to be rare and 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'<sup>6</sup> which forms part of their 'informed conservation' series.

The overall external form of the warehouse changed very little over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

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 & 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)

---

<sup>6</sup> Colum Giles & Bob Hawkins, 'Storehouses of Empire: Liverpool's Historic Warehouses', English Heritage, 2004

and compiled a detailed gazetteer which emanated from a continuing concern<sup>7</sup> 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.

The MCS understands 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 Heaps 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	Heaps Rice Mill, Shaws Alley 4:74 from south south east
Ref:	AA97/00886/FP	Heaps Rice Mill, Shaws Alley 4:59 from west
Ref:	AA97/00902/FP	Heaps Rice Mill, Upper Pownall Street 4:73 from east south east

All are Original, Photographs (Prints), Photographic Positives

## Context

In 2005 English Heritage<sup>8</sup> 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.

It is understood that 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

---

<sup>7</sup> 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

<sup>8</sup> On 1 April 2015, English Heritage was divided into two parts, Historic England, who inherited the statutory and protection functions of the old organisation, and the new English Heritage Trust, a charity which would operate the historic properties.

the city and was supporting the retention of the external walls and appearance. Also, concern was also being expressed about the extent of the proposed loss of the interior and was apparently 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.

The proposed developers, at that time, 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 the guidance then, and now, regarding the protection of the historic environment the potential loss of the interiors 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; however, the Council's Planning Records show that the 2005 application was withdrawn by the Applicant.

Nevertheless, 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 was considered by the LPA and on the 30th November 2006 granted planning permission 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.

The planning history since 2009 is summarised in the following table:

Application No.	Status	Decision Date
06PM/1220	Decided	08-05-06
12F/1896	Decided	17-09-12
14F/1305	Decided	07-08-15
14L/2181	Decided	20-11-14
17F/0107	Decided	08-09-17
17L/0108	Decided	30-03-17
17DIS/2700	Decided	19-01-18
17F/2768	Decided	19-01-18
17L/3096	Decided	13-12-17
18LE/1917	Decided	01-08-18
18DIS/2652	Awaiting Decision	-
19DIS/0105	Awaiting Decision	-

The MCS notes that in Condition 25 attached to the approval (*Application No. 06F/2149*) 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).

## Analysis

In 2005 the buildings were still in use; 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 shows the building in use and in a relatively fair condition Fig 2.

**Fig 2 - Heaps 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**

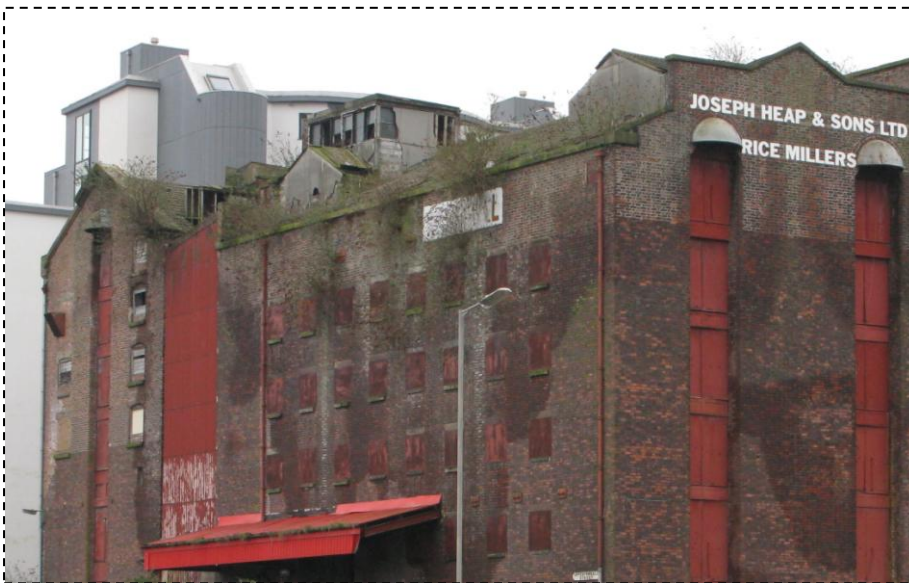
Source: Liverpool City Council





**Fig 5 - Cast iron columns with brick arches springing from the cast iron beams and wrought iron ties preventing spread**

Source: Liverpool City Council



**Fig 6 - Heaps Rice Mill viewed from Park Lane (2013)**

Source: DG Marsden

Fig 6, taken in 2013, shows the exterior of the building from virtually the same point as Fig 2. 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.

The amount of vegetation growth that has become established since the building was vacated will be undermining the structural stability of the high level masonry.

Photographs posted on the internet<sup>9</sup> in 2013/14 clearly demonstrated then that condition of the interior warehouses was deteriorating.

### Current Situation

Heap's Rice Mill 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.

Following a successful campaign by the MCS and others Heap's Rice Mills were added to the Government's statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest at Grade II on 31 July 2014 for the following reasons:

- Architectural form: it is a good example of an early and mid-C19 warehouse complex adapted in the late-C19 for a single unified use as a rice processing and storage site; its austere styling being characteristic of the C18 and C19 warehouse buildings that have played a significant role in contributing to Liverpool's World Heritage Site status;
- Location: it is an imposing and highly prominent building complex set within Liverpool's Baltic Triangle adjacent to the southern docks of Albert Dock, Salthouse Dock and Wapping Dock, and it remains as one of the earliest and last surviving warehouse complexes in this once thriving industrial area, acting as an important physical reminder of the area's rich trading links and mercantile history;
- Historic interest: its links to the Far East and the Burmese rice trade reflect Liverpool's prominence and international significance as a port city in the C19;
- Planning and survival: despite some later alteration the building's historic character survives and the interior planning and function remain evident; the individual warehouse units each still remaining clearly readable. Numerous interior features also survive, including stairs, heavy softwood timber roof trusses, and possible C19 hoists;
- Adaptation and development: the introduction of later-C19 fireproofing measures, both externally and internally, reveal not only the prosperity and importance of the Heaps' business at that time, but also the changing technology and developments in Liverpool's warehouse construction in the C19.
- Group Value: its group value with the Scandinavian Seamen's Church, Park Lane, (listed at II\*) not only because of their proximity but because both buildings represent part of Liverpool's maritime history.

Source: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1421261>

---

<sup>9</sup> 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>



Under the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 the former Rice Mill is to be treated accordingly as a designated heritage asset which has a level of significance worthy of formal protection as well as being carefully adapted for a new use.

The statutory protection afforded to Heap's Rice Mill 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 the designated Albert Dock Conservation Area to the west.

The Heap's Rice Mill lies within the buffer zone of the inscribed World Heritage Site, as such any proposals should adhere to the respective guidelines/advice that has been formally adopted by Liverpool City Council in its Supplementary Guidance Documents pertaining to the control of development within the City's successful bid to UNESCO for the Liverpool Mercantile Maritime City World Heritage Site in 2004.

The MCS advocates that potential developers should respect the advice within the 'Informed Conservation Series' on Warehouses (mentioned earlier), published jointly by English Heritage and Liverpool City Council, recognising that conversion and adaptation works can be achieved without seriously affecting the original fabric.

The MCS accepts that some alterations to the former Rice Mill may be required but these should be discussed and agreed as part of any pre-application with the Local Planning Authority and Historic England before formal applications are lodged with the City Council at the Local Planning Authority for formal consideration.

MCS understands that the City Council as the Local Planning Authority has not compiled a 'local list' of undesignated heritage assets but it is understood that within the emerging Local Plan for Liverpool regard will be given to the protection of all recognised heritage assets as set out in the documents currently lodged with the Secretary of State and Planning Inspectorate for public examination.

MCS understands that a date has yet to be set for the Public Inquiry in to the emerging Local Plan for Liverpool. In the meantime development proposals are being considered against the dated Liverpool Unitary Development Plan 2002.



## 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

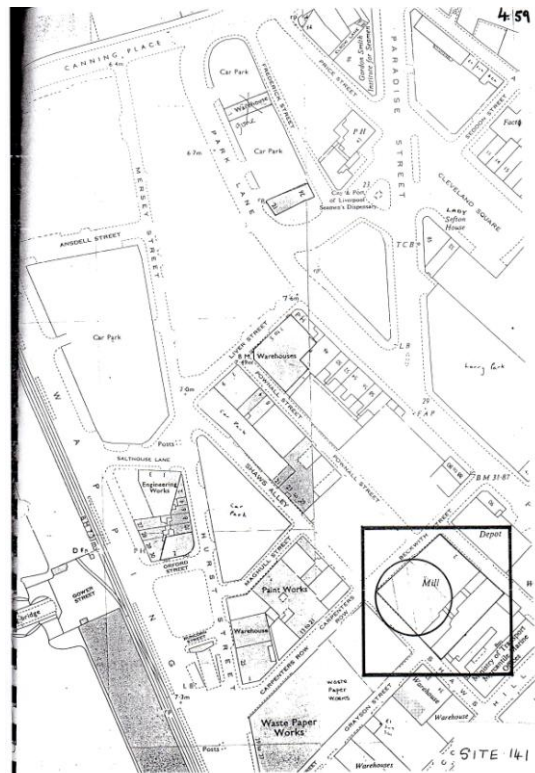
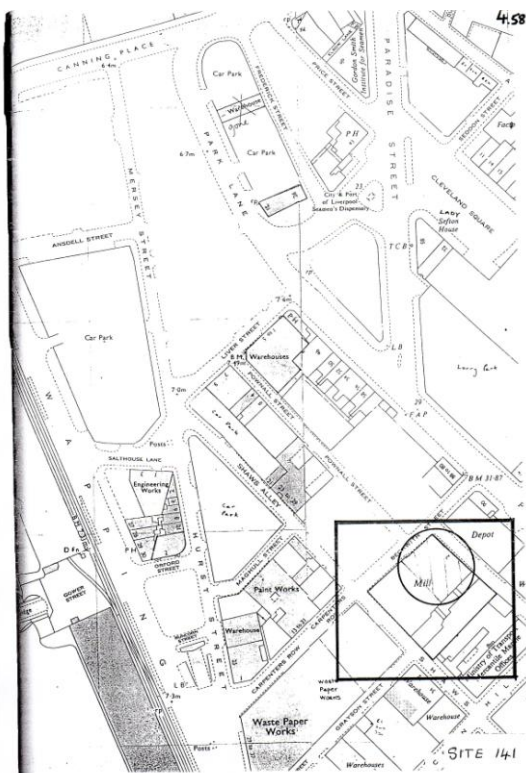
Date	Scale	Reference	Survey/ Revision	Notes
1927	25"	OS Lancs Sheet 106.14	1924 (R)	Undivided block 'Rice Mill'
1908	25"	OS Lancs Sheet 106.14	1906 (R)	As 1927
1891	1:500	OS Lancs Sheet 106.14.17	1890 (S)	As 1908; large-scale shows more clearly the distinct 'kink' on Beckwith St. side.
1850	5': 1 mile	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 lip. 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 c1980 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