

Chaddesden Sidings - Wagon Repair Workshop

On 2 October 1872 the Midland Railway Company approved the construction of wagon repair workshops at Chaddesden Sidings at a cost of £6,868. The premises were probably designed by J.H. Sanders, architect of the Midland Railway Company. The bricks were manufactured by Edward Dusautoy, a local brick manufacturer trading as Rowditch Brickworks.

In 1873 the sidings covered an area of some fifty acres, with the total length of track being in the region of seventeen miles; and in that year a total of 1,018,000 wagons, or 3,200 per working day passed through the sidings.

By 1891 the Midland Railway had 10,000 employees. Many lived in Chaddesden, some in the railway cottages. Only those cottages on Highfield Lane remain; Toys'R'Us stands on the site of those that were demolished.

Jean Moss



This photograph taken before the building of Wyvern Retail Park (named after the Wyvern on the Midland Railway's coat of arms), shows the three wagon repair shops destroyed by fire in 1994. Only the building on the right remains.

After the closure of Chaddesden Sidings, the tracks were lifted leaving the disused workshop, the largest building on the site, isolated from the railway. The building and surrounding land was bought by the Interior Stone Features company and later sold to Clowes Developments who rented it back to the company for use as a fireplace factory. That use came to a sudden end on 14 April 1994. Late that Thursday morning a fire broke out, apparently caused by a spark from a vacuum cleaner igniting fumes in a spray workshop. All 55 employees escaped unharmed but it took 35 firemen, 6 fire engines and a turntable ladder over an hour to put out the fire. Wyvern Way outside the workshop was closed for a while. The workshop was so badly damaged that it had to be demolished leaving three lines of rails set in concrete to indicate its former extent.

The business resumed in January 1996 as The Derby Fireplace Company in the much smaller building that remained. The porch facing Wyvern Way and the ornamental woodwork on that side of the building were added in 1995-96 as part of the repair work after the fire. The company traded as a fireplace showroom (no manufacturing taking place on site) for twenty years.

In July 2014 Marks & Spencer submitted a planning application for a supermarket and other retail units on the site of the wagon repair workshop which would have resulted in demolition of the surviving building. The workshop is not a listed building but there was much debate at the time regarding its historical significance. Although the planning application was withdrawn in 2015, the uncertainty for the future of The Derby Fireplace Company may have affected the viability of the business. Directors Keith and Michael Harrison indicated that they would have difficulty in finding alternative premises at a price their business could afford. The Company was put into voluntary liquidation in June 2016. The building now stands empty with an uncertain future.



The surviving part of the wagon repair workshop photographed in October 2005 when it was occupied by The Derby Fireplace Company.

Peter Barnes

