

**Collection of memories/history by Mr David Hunter
of his family and connections with Foundry Yard
Boroughbridge**

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Boroughbridge

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I have provided some old photographs to illustrate what I refer to in the text which follows. The first is of my grandfather Frank Boddy outside the front of his then premises in St James Square (Now Partners in Style) It is from the rear of this property that he had an engineering business from 1885 to 1917 from which he served the business and farming community in general engineering repairs including steam engines as Photograph. I believe there was an entrance to the rear by a lane running from Church Street through to New Row.

My mother (1900), and two uncles Bill and John (Jack) were born here. My uncle Charles was born in the Foundry house in New Row. (Now a veterinary practice) to the left of the entrance to the foundry yard (see picture).

The Foundry yard was first used as a Tanning yard then purchased by a Mr Charlton in about 1800. He made lead mining machinery and my great grandfather Charles Boddy a millwright (engineer) came to work there and when Mr Charlton died he bought the business from his widow. He lived in the house after marrying a local girl Jane Gatenby. They brought up three children there, the youngest being Frank. Unfortunately when Frank was 6 months old in 1853 his father Charles crushed his thumb at Boroughbridge Rail Station and died of tetanus three days later.

The Foundry business was then sold about 1869 to a Mr William Walker a blacksmith from Langthorpe. Mr Walker had two sons who were brought up at the Foundry but in 1916 the youngest son went bankrupt. Meanwhile Frank Boddy son of Charles had grown up, he served as an apprentice blacksmith and having worked in an engineering works returned to Boroughbridge and set up business in the James's Square property.

When the Foundry became available after Mr Walkers bankruptcy Grandfather Frank was able to rent the property and moved his engineering business to New Row. The site extended from New Row down to the River Tutt. It was a long narrow yard with buildings either side. The foundry building was at the bottom on the right (now a café) there were two furnaces against the wall of this building for melting the cast iron and inside was the moulding shop.

At the bottom of the yard was a large open fronted building used to store the coke for the furnaces. At the back of this building was a doorway which gave access to a footbridge into a small building on the other side of the river had previously been used as a machine shop but then used as a pattern store. There were two turbines side by side in what was an early undershot water wheel pit. This had originally been used for driving a mill for grinding bone into bone meal many years before in the 1700s. One of the turbines was moved across the river to the foundry side in 1928 in order to drive the machine shop equipment, which it did until after the Second World War. The machine shop was on the left at the bottom of the yard it housed equipment for cleaning up the casting together with general blacksmithing work.

Boroughbridge at that time was owned by the Lawson family but after Mr Andrew Lawson died in 1917 death duties had to be paid, such that in 1924 the properties were sold at public auction. Most people were able to obtain mortgages from the Midland Bank, and Frank was able to buy the freehold but hard times were upon them with the big depression and the general strike of 1925. The Foundry carried on until 1940. Grandfather Frank died in 1942 and Uncle Charles was called up to the RAF as an engine fitter. My grandfathers executor's, were Uncle William, and my father David Hunter an Incorporated Accountant in York. My mother travelled over weekly to pay the limited staff which had been left until my Uncle Charles was demobbed in August 1945.

Before my parents were married my mother was employed as the personal assistant to the Managing Director of the soft drinks factory now converted into flats at Langthorpe.

The foundry business had not been able financially to maintain the property and machinery and life was difficult for Charles. To improve matters he installed a new furnace, which reduced melting costs dramatically. He introduced a second hand moulding machine which together with the new furnace helped improve the viability of the company. The business received an order for 10,000 flywheels for "Petter" engines a well known engine in its time. A substantial number of wheels were made, however it seems India and Australia had put an import ban on Petter engines and so they returned the flywheels. A foundry in Newcastle had been involved in the same problem. This caused such financial difficulties that the Foundry had ultimately to close down in 1956.

In order to provide for Franks widow Elizabeth, who still owned the property, it was let to Tithersleys, a company who washed and cut up cotton rags. These were boxed and sold to garages and the like as cleansing rags. Operating in Boroughbridge the business was able to extract water from the River Tutt at no cost. Previously it seems when Tithersleys operated in Blackburn it cost them £100 per day for the water they consumed, quite a saving for them in those days. When Elizabeth died Tithersleys bought the property. When Mr Tithersley died the laundry was closed and the freehold sold to Mr Raymond Horner.

The River Tutt over the years has been the driving force or reason for all the businesses in Foundry Yard until the present day.

The Foundry had been rented by the Boddy family from about 1850 to 1869 and from 1916 to 1924 and owned from 1924 to 1968.

Meanwhile what about my other brothers? Uncle Bill went on from being a Head Master to become a schools inspector and Uncle Jack had formed Rivercraft Boroughbridge Ltd before the 1940-1945 war during which he made life boats and then transformed into a wood sawmill which is now John Boddy Saw mills. His son is currently Managing Director of this well known company.