

Wicker Arches

The Arches were built in 1847- 48 for the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, of coarse grey-weathering gritstone. Pevsner states that the main arch is “72 feet wide and was built of stone from Lord Wharnccliffe’s quarry at Wharnccliffe Craggs”. The Arches were damaged by bombs during the War and renovated in 1990. The plaque on the wall seems to give the wrong date (1839) for the initial construction.



Wicker arches – the main arch



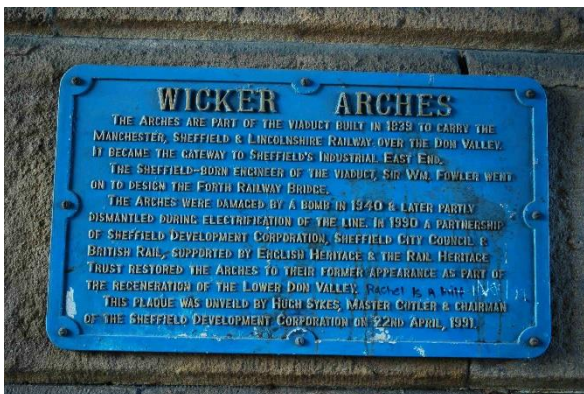
The badge of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway



Detail of coarse gritstone (Coin is 2 cm)



Cross-bedding in the gritstone



Plaque at the Wicker Arches
(with the wrong date!)



New (2010) and old (1848) stonework near the Wicker

The 1855 “6 inch” map, Sheet Yorkshire 288, shows no sign of quarries on Wharnccliffe Craggs. If the stone did come from here, it could have been worked at intervals along the face, without a “quarry” being established, or could possibly be from loose blocks of the Wharnccliffe Rock, fallen naturally from the face of the Craggs. Other less dominant lines of crags lie to the west of and below the Wharnccliffe Craggs in Wharnccliffe Wood. These are

formed in the Loxley Edge Rock and in an associated yellowish medium-coarse gritstone, with occasional layers of granules. The stone bleaches to grey as it weathers, and seems to form a good match with the blocks in the Arches. The scale of the Arches and associated approaches would have required a considerable tonnage of stone, with piles of waste at the source, for which there is little obvious evidence. Given that the older section of the railway line itself lay at the base of the escarpment, one would have thought that it would have been used to transport stone further down the line to the Wicker.

A more logical source in the Wharncliffe Rock could be the large quarry next to the railway line, near the former Deepcar Station (SK2947 9811). However, this quarry is not shown on the 6 inch OS map of 1854 (surveyed 1850-51). It does appear on the map of 1894 (surveyed in 1891) and by 1932 seems to have been considerably enlarged, so clearly contributed to later requirements for stone. Could it have been the source of the Wicker Arches, but the 1851 surveyors missed it off the map perhaps?

A local historian from Wadsley maintains that the stone came from the large quarries on Wadsley/Loxley Commons*. So far, we have not found an unequivocal source of this stone, and further research is needed.



Tumbled blocks of gritstone in Wharncliffe Woods
(Scale bar 1m)



Inner relief road (Brunswick Road) - new work in Peakmoor Sandstone, recapitulating the old Wicker Arches opposite

Around 2010, an Inner Relief Road was constructed, designed with “arches” on the north side of it, where it ran alongside the approaches to the Wicker. This new work is faced with Peakmoor Sandstone, from Stanton Moor, near Matlock, supplied by Realstone. This is a medium-grained buff sandstone, now widely used in the region.

References:

Pevsner Architectural Guides: Sheffield. 2004. Harman, R. and Minnis, J. Yale University Press, p156.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheffield,_Ashton-under-Lyne_and_Manchester_Railway (This was amalgamated with another railway in 1847 to form the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, which became the Great Central Railway in 1899).

* John Robinson, personal communication

Realstone, www.realstone.co.uk