

ROBERT COLVER, (1842-1916) Steel manufacturer

Donated by Mrs F A Neill, Mistress Cutler 1937 (Robert Colver's daughter)

Robert Colver was Master Cutler in 1890. He was born in Sheffield in 1842, the third son of William Colver, whose family had built up a business as builder and contractor. He was educated at the Milk Street Academy in central Sheffield. He was initially apprenticed to one of his uncles, a farmer and trained as land valuer, buying his own farm at the age of 21.

In 1875, he gave up farming and joined (Sir) Joseph Jonas, a German, who in 1870, had established a small local steel and tool firm as the Continental Steel Works, Attercliffe. The firm became Jonas, Meyer and Colver, manufacturers of steel for tools, files, saws, etc.

In 1894, Jonas and Colver took over W.T. Beesley, Universal Steel Works and in 1877 were cold rolling steel for clocks and watches. In 1905, they owned Pilot Works, Corporation St, and employed 600-700 hands. Jonas & Colver were also partners in a concern in the Black Forest, Germany, which used cold rolled steel supplied from Sheffield. In 1909, 1,500 people were employed. Its output of *Novo* high-speed steel was greater than any other firm.

During the First World War, the firm was said to be sole supplier of aero-cranks and was the largest high-speed steelmakers, with 3,000 employees. In 1929, after losses, especially during the coal strike, the business was bought by Stuart C. Goodwin of Neepsend Steel & Tool Co Ltd. The firm was renamed Jonas & Colver (Novo) Ltd.

Robert Colver was also director of J & G Wells, Eckington collieries, south of Sheffield. He died on 2 December, 1916.

Other public positions

Robert Colver was a Churchman, a Conservative and a freemason. He was a member of Sheffield Chamber of Commerce and a JP.

Artist - unknown