

## love commerce and industry

For further information about all of the attractions featured in this trail please see [www.visitmiddlesbrough.com](http://www.visitmiddlesbrough.com).

***This Trail uncovers Middlesbrough's past wealth and prosperity. It begins in Centre Square with a bit of history.....***

To understand how Centre Square and its immediate environs came into existence we have to first understand something of **Middlesbrough's** early history. A story which begins not here but a little to the north in an area now called **St Hilda's**, close to the famous **Transporter Bridge**.

In the medieval period the name of Middlesbrough is believed to have derived from the position of a Benedictine settlement, which laid on a low hill overlooking the River Tees and was half way – or “mid” way - between the monastic houses of Whitby and Durham.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century a small farmhouse stood close to the site of that early monastic house. In the 1831 Census this Middlesbrough was identified as a township of 26 houses occupied by 30 families, half of whom were agricultural workers. The population totalled 154. The hamlet, however, was constantly overshadowed by the busy river port of Stockton on Tees situated further up the river. Coal was exported from Stockton and the creation of the Darlington and Stockton Railway in 1825 made that town even more prosperous. So much more important was that upstream rival that in 1831 Middlesbrough's mail was sent “care of” Stockton on Tees Post Office!

*So how did Middlesbrough become the centre of so much industrial success?*

The 19<sup>th</sup> century brought one of the most dramatic increases in town dwelling in Great Britain. Many completely new towns appeared for all sorts of different reasons. Some developed around spas (eg Harrogate); others because of the growth of seaside holidays (eg Weston-super-Mare) and others because of military connections (eg Catterick). But the biggest factor of all was the expansion of industry. And specifically the expansion of the railway industry. If a railway bypassed a town then development of that town stagnated. If the railway reached a town then commercial growth was guaranteed.

*And so it was with Middlesbrough.*

The arrival of the “iron horse” initiated massive commercial growth and created new opportunities. And undoubtedly it was the influence of Middlesbrough's industrialists and entrepreneurs from that railway age which left an indelible impact on today's townscape.

*But Mother Nature also helped.*

The River Tees twists and turns from Stockton to the North Sea and this local geography proved a barrier to further development of the coal exporting trade from Stockton. The time had come for a new, specially selected site to be developed closer to the mouth of the river thus avoiding unnecessary navigation. In 1830 the Stockton and Darlington railway was extended east until it reached a place of naturally deeper water on the banks of the River Tees and with that extension came the birth of a new name on the riverbanks.

*Middlesbrough?*

*No – Port Darlington!*

**Port Darlington** became the coal export centre on the River Tees. Wooden staithes, designed by one of the foremost railway engineers of the day – Timothy Hackworth - facilitated the loading of coal onto waiting ships.

But where was the new influx of workers and their families to live? All that existed was that little farm complex near the riverbanks.

*Enter onto the scene a group of local businessmen.....*

In 1829 **Joseph Pease** of Darlington and five business partners purchased that farm and its accompanying estates for £30,000. The farmhouse was demolished, revealing the remnants of the medieval church beneath, and its demolition left a clean sheet of paper for Pease and his fellow business colleagues as **“Owners of the Middlesbrough Estate”** to completely redevelop the plot and promote the new port facility as a rival to Newcastle and Sunderland to the north. They were the Founding Fathers of Middlesbrough and the position of that new town was laid out in what is now called the **St Hilda’s** area, north of the present day railway line (or “over the border” as the locals used to say!).

Joseph Pease (d.1872) was a member of the Society of Friends – a Quaker. He was MP for Darlington and attended the House of Commons wearing plain Quaker clothes to speak on the abolition of slavery and education for children. The Quakers were renowned not only for their profound religious conviction but also for their business acumen. Their success was based on liberal and honourable business policies and the word of a Quaker businessman could be trusted. The Pease family had already provided the financial backing for George Stephenson in his development of the Darlington to Stockton railway project and Quaker architects such as Alfred Waterhouse had already designed new buildings for 19<sup>th</sup> century Darlington.

*And now the Pease family turned their attention to Middlesbrough.*

Thanks to Joseph Pease Middlesbrough was re-born in the 1830’s to develop, initially, as a dormitory town for Port Darlington.

Within a very few years there was rapid expansion of the coal trade and equally rapid building of the new town of Middlesbrough and when in the 1850’s Middlesbrough’s economy received a massive new lease of life with a huge expansion in the local iron industry, the original railway-inspired town was swamped with the subsequent growth of population and industries. The birth of **“Ironopolis”** created a town bursting at the seams and it quickly became apparent that a second wave of urban development was needed, south of the railway line.

*And that’s where the Centre **Square** area comes in.....*

**Centre Square** and **Central Gardens** stand in what became Middlesbrough’s second stage of urban development. In the 1850’s the focus of the town shifted here and within a decade was fully developed with a well-organised grid system of wide new streets laid out around the north end of **Linthorpe Road**, which had been a simple country lane. As Middlesbrough continued to prosper that grid extended southwards becoming larger, more spacious and socially more superior.

As with many cities and towns in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Middlesbrough developed a strong civic pride with the building of a prestigious Town Hall and Central Library (see the "**Art and Architecture Trail**" available on [www.visitmiddlesbrough.com](http://www.visitmiddlesbrough.com)).

*But two statues in the centre of Victoria Square act as specific reminders of Middlesbrough's commercial heyday.*

And also as a reminder that Mother Nature alone was not responsible for Middlesbrough's industrial success story. A helping hand was needed from men who had the skills and entrepreneurial instinct to take advantage of what Mother Nature provided.

In January 1901 Queen Victoria died and in July of that year **Sir Samuel Alexander Sadler MP** (1842-1911) formally opened what was then an ornamental garden laid out to mark her long reign. Sir Samuel had studied medicine at Birmingham and his first job had been working in commercial laboratories in the Midlands. In 1868 he established Teesside's first oil and chemical company in Cargo Fleet Road producing ammonia salts and coal tar products. His factory employed hundreds of workers.

Sir Samuel's commercial influence in the town was balanced by his strong sense of public duty. He served as Middlesbrough's Conservative MP and this statute of him shows him in his court dress symbolising his Knighthood and in his Mayoral robes to show his contribution to public life. The French born sculptor Edouard Lanteri, Professor of Sculpture at the Royal College of Art in London, was appointed. He captured his subject's true personality as a genial, well-liked gentleman. Sadler had been so admired during his lifetime that it took only 80 days to raise by public subscription the necessary funds to commission the sculpture.

*And why was bronze chosen for the statue.....?*

Because it was deemed the best material at the time to withstand the effects of the local climate.

**John Vaughan** (1799-1868) occupies the other pedestal. "Jacky" Vaughan moved to Newcastle upon Tyne as manager of an ironworks. The move brought him into contact with German born **Henry Bolckow** (1806-1878) but it took an invitation from the Quaker Joseph Pease in 1841 to persuade the two men to form a business partnership in Middlesbrough. Pease was aware of the growing need for the emerging town of Middlesbrough to have an alternative industry to that of the coal exporting trade which was gradually migrating north to the deeper port of West Hartlepool. And so he sold them several acres of land in **Commercial Street** near the banks of the River Tees on which they established an iron works.

Anchors, rails and chains were the first products of the new joint business venture but it wasn't all plain sailing and Pease had to provide financial assistance when Vaughan and Bolckow hit a rocky period.

Their first blast furnaces, however, were not in Middlesbrough. They constructed furnaces at Witton le Wear in County Durham where there were supplies of good quality coking coal and limestone, essential ingredients for the smelting process. The iron ore came from Whitby and arrived in Middlesbrough by ship to be transferred by railway to Witton le Wear. At these furnaces molten lead flowed into sand channels called "sows" and then into smaller sand moulds called "pigs". This pig iron was then returned to Middlesbrough and processed in the newly built

forges, foundaries and rolling mills. Cast iron was then made by purifying the pig iron in a cupola furnace.

*But all this transportation meant prices were rising.....*

And Middlesbrough's story may have turned out very differently if John Vaughan had not decided one day in 1850 to go shooting rabbits in the countryside high up on a local hill called **Eston Nab**. Instead of finding rabbits he discovered a good source of high quality ironstone, which meant that no longer did the business have to rely on ironstone from the Whitby area. Costs reduced immediately.

*The rest, as they say, is history.....*

By 1860 there were more than 40 blast furnaces. Vaughan and Bolckow really were the founders of "**Ironopolis**" and the development of Middlesbrough into the greatest iron-producing district in the world was their achievement. No wonder they have been described as the "Romulus and Remus" of Middlesbrough. By 1864 they were operating the largest company in Great Britain and on his death four years later John Vaughan left £1 million in his will. His son, Thomas Vaughan, was not so fortunate and was declared bankrupt at a later date, a move that sent shockwaves through Middlesbrough.

John Vaughan was Mayor of Middlesbrough three times and three years after his death the 1871 Census recorded a population of 39,284 or an incredible 2,550% increase on the Census of 40 years earlier. A reflection of the growth in an industry, which John Vaughan helped to establish. In 1901 that figure had risen to 90,000.

No wonder that on a visit to Middlesbrough in 1862 the Prime Minister, **W E Gladstone**, said "This remarkable place, the youngest child of England's enterprise, is an infant, but if an infant, an infant Hercules".

*On the statue of John Vaughan are relief panels showing scenes connected to his working life: a coal pithead; docks; rolled steel mill and a steelworks.*

Head north now along **Albert Road** passing the Town Hall on the right and cross over **Corporation Road**.

At **42 Albert Road** is a quirky reminder of Middlesbrough's commercial past. An ornate set of doors grace what is now the Barracuda Bar (2006) but was originally a bank, which opened in 1939. The doors belonged to a different bank, the **National Provincial Bank**, and were cast with 24 panels inscribed with Greek lettering depicting ancient coins found in the Mediterranean area. To ensure the authenticity of the design, National Provincial Bank's Chief Architect, W F C Holden, consulted the Coin Department of the British Museum. A steel cover was put over the original wooden doors to provide extra strength and security.

Albert Road was also the location for **Joseph Winterschladen's** business premises. Born in Cologne in 1842 he arrived in Middlesbrough in 1865 to establish his wine importing business in partnership with Uvo Pauls. Winterschladen is buried locally at St Cuthbert's churchyard, Marton.

At the end of Albert Road the **A66** road carries today's modern commercial traffic on an east west cross Pennine route linking the Tees Valley with the industries of west Cumbria.

On the other side of the bypass is **Exchange Square** where there are more of Middlesbrough's impressive Victorian buildings.

This area was once the centre of commerce and industry of the town and the **Royal Exchange Building** (1868-1985) provided a base for offices, meeting places and shops.

All that remains of that building today is the eye-catching **carved sandstone heads** placed around the periphery of the Square. Eleven figures were salvaged when the building was demolished and are the original keystones of its ground floor windows. Three heads stand close together and another eight heads are arranged in pairs back to back around the Square. They look almost Biblical in style although they were actually modelled on local dignitaries of the period.

The scale of the now vanished Exchange Building is echoed by the former **Midland Bank Chambers** now occupied by NECC (2006). Step inside for a glimpse of its former grandeur when a bank. The remainder of this elegant terrace was designed by **William Blessley** as a mixture of offices, workshops and warehouses.

**Teesside Archives** occupies another impressive building to the east of the Square and is well worth a visit to collect more information on Middlesbrough's past.

*But once again it is a statue which draws the eye.....*

**Henry Bolckow** (1806-1878) was the business partner of John Vaughan. A German immigrant born at Mecklenburg he amassed £20,000 capital whilst working as an accountant on Tyneside. John Vaughan had the technical skills in the iron trade, the scientific theory as a metallurgist and additional capital to bring to their joint Middlesbrough venture, which was encouraged by Joseph Pease. By 1851 they had established 3 blast furnaces in the town, which grew to 29 furnaces within 3 years.

*Phenomenal!*

Bolckow and Vaughan realised they had the three main ingredients for making the iron industry a success: readily available low cost ore supplies at Eston Nab; cheap coal from the Durham coalfield and proximity to good shipping points.

In 1875 they also recognised the potential of the market in steel, a stronger and more resilient material than iron, and opened the first Bessemer Steel plant in Middlesbrough. But this was not a great success as the local iron ore had large phosphorus content and could not be used successfully in the Bessemer Converter process. In fact, both Bolckow and Vaughan were dead before Middlesbrough was producing steel in great quantities. And that later development was thanks to **Arthur Dorman** (see "**Art and Architecture**" Trail).

In 1853 Bolckow was elected Middlesbrough's first Mayor and 14 years later became MP. A great benefactor to local schools, churches and hospitals he was also the man who gifted land for Middlesbrough's first public park in 1868 called Albert Park. He lived in comfortable style at Marton Hall until 1856. (Demolished) a site, which is now occupied by the **Captain Cook Birthplace Museum** at Stewart Park.

The statue in Exchange Square shows Bolckow handing over a charter of the town's incorporation and it stands on land donated by the family of Joseph Pease who had been the first to encourage the Vaughan/Bolckow partnership. Public subscriptions raised the necessary cash to pay for the statue and Bolckow would no doubt have been pleased to hear that money flooded in from across the social classes. The richest ironmasters and the most humble iron workers all donated cash.

From Bolckow's statue cross into **Zetland Road**. The stone fronted building with steps and large bow windows was designed by **Phillip Webb** (1831-1915), an architect and designer working in the **Arts and Crafts** period. Ironically, this movement grew out of a dissatisfaction with the mass produced products of the Victorian industrial period. The art critic John Ruskin and the artist William Morris were the "movers and shakers" of the movement in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and their aim was to combine art with old-fashioned craftsmanship to improve the standards of decorative design.

Phillip Webb was closely associated with those ideals and designed furniture as well as houses for his clients. His most famous house design was the Red House, Bexleyheath, for William Morris and examples of his work are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. But Middlesbrough has the only commercial office building designed by him.

*The medallions on the front of the building which read "1891" and "RB" are in typical Arts and Crafts style lettering.*

The "B" is a reference to the family of **Sir Isaac Lowthian Bell** for whom Webb designed the building. Bells' iron factory employed 6,000 people and Sir Isaac became first President of the Iron and Steel Institute and first recipient of the Bessemer Gold Medal in 1874. Bell Brothers were taken over by Dorman Long, the bridge manufacturing company, who moved their business concerns to this building.

At number **11-13 Zetland Road** Middlesbrough's first daily newspaper was published. The Daily Gazette came into existence in 1869. Twenty years later an explosion caused a cut in the gas supply, which powered the printing presses. Emergencies call for desperate measures and the Gazette management borrowed a Council steamroller to drive the printing presses.

*And that day's edition was only one hour late hitting the streets of Middlesbrough....*

Return to **Exchange Place** and turn left towards the **Railway Station** (1877). This was designed by North East Railway architect William Peachey. Walk beneath the colourful railway bridge into **Queen's Square**, once the commercial and high-class residential area. In the future, this area will be more firmly linked with Exchange Square by the creation of a new creative cluster to form the **BoHo** quarter.

*It certainly has some lovely buildings to enjoy.*

The red brick building on the left houses PD Ports (2006) and beyond is an impressive stone building with four pillars. A wonderful carving decorates the triangular shaped Tympanum above the doorway. The subject is "**Brittania and Supporters**" and there is a seated female figure, an ironworker and a miner with carvings of tools representing Middlesbrough's industries. A building clearly celebrating the town's industrial prowess and commercial success.

Originally this was the **National Provincial Bank** designed by London architect John Gibson in 1872, the doors of which are now at No. 42 Albert Road. In 1872 the **Cleveland Club** took over the building. To be accepted as a member of this Club was regarded as a mark of social status by Middlesbrough's Victorian business community. Prior to the building of the bank the home of **John Gilbert Holmes**, one of Middlesbrough's shipbuilders had stood on the site. As well as being famous for ships he was also renowned as a teetotaler and described as "the only gentleman in town".

The handsome brick building standing opposite was the home of Henry Bolckow and John Vaughan, founders of the Cleveland Iron trade. As young men they had courted two sisters whom they subsequently married and the two families continued to live next door to each other from 1841-1860.

**Cleveland Street** continues through the heart of a modern industrial landscape. This is the **St Hilda's** area of Middlesbrough where the Benedictine monastic settlement once stood on a low hill off to the left, which was also the site of the original farmhouse which Joseph Pease and the "**Owners of the Middlesbrough Estate**" bought in 1829.

In this area the Owners laid out a grid pattern of 5 streets running north south and three streets running east west over a 32-acre site. The main streets were 56' wide and the smaller streets 36' wide. Within that area 125 plots were marked out for development under conditions laid down by Pease and his colleagues. A Code of Conduct was drawn up which included an agreement that people would sweep their own footpaths.

This first phase of Middlesbrough's urban development also included a **Market Square** with a **Town Hall** (1846) and a **Customs House** fashioned in the Greek Revival style. This original town hall was small scale, an indication of the Owners' expectations of growth for their new town.

In 1838 the Customs House was the location for a reception and banquet in honour of a visit by the Duke of Sussex, Queen Victoria's uncle and Middlesbrough's first royal visitor. Here, merchants and businessmen could meet together to deal in iron and other products.

Both the Town Hall and the Customs House still stand today. A church dedicated to **St Hilda** was built in 1840 (now demolished) and was designed by John Green, the architect responsible for Newcastle upon Tyne's Theatre Royal.

That Market Square became the centre for outdoor entertainment and sideshows on Saturday evenings. Radiating out from the Square were **North, South, East and West Streets**. The Owners paid for the paving of the streets and for construction of sewers and gutters.

At first it was intended to have no more than 5,000 residents but a huge boom in house building in the 1840's meant that all the land originally purchased by the Owners was quickly used up. Hence the subsequent development south towards what is now **Victoria Square** and the present Town Hall.

Around about this time a local saying came into use reflecting Middlesbrough's changing fortunes and meteoric rise in industry, population and communications.

*"Yarm was. Stockton is. Middlesbrough will be."*

Clearly an apt description. What had previously been farmland disappeared beneath a wave of new businesses including iron works, merchants, innkeepers, tailors and shopkeepers.

Close to the Customs House is **Commercial Street** where one of Middlesbrough's other great benefactors lived. **William Fallowes** (d 1889) was a shipbroker that worked with the original Owners and brought his immense skills to bear as an organiser for the export of coal along the River Tees. His first ship, Sunnyside, sailed in 1831 and the town was to enjoy the benefits of his work for the next 50 years.

He instigated improvements on the river including the introduction of navigation lights and buoys.

The **Ship Inn** is a reminder of the days when local men worked in hot, dangerous conditions in the blast furnaces and needed to quench their thirst at the end of the shift. Following an industrial accident at a nearby ironworks in 1858, the casualties were cared for in this pub's stable. The stable was built on a floating platform perched over the top of a small stream running to one side of the building. Too much for one poor casualty who is said to have succumbed to fright as he lay suspended above the running water.

Nearby **Vulcan Street** occupies the original 6-acre site of Bolckow and Vaughan's first iron works. This is where the pig iron smelted at their Witton le Wear works was brought for further processing and where they produced iron rails for the expanding rail network.

And it was their later search for fresh water supplies to use in the smelting process, which gave birth to another of Middlesbrough's success stories.

In 1863, whilst drilling for water, Bolckow and Vaughan discovered huge beds of **salt** 100' thick. The brinefields were the beginning of Middlesbrough's long and successful link with the chemical industry, which continues, today with the work of international companies including Huntsman Tioxide and Semb Corp Utilities.

The red brick wall nearby is all that remains of the **Cleveland Salt works** (1887).

*Finally, one of Tees Valley's iconic structures making a fitting end to this "Commerce and Industry" Trail.....*

Middlesbrough's **Transporter Bridge** was opened in 1911 by Prince Arthur of Connaught (son of Prince Albert who had opened the Albert Park some forty years earlier).

The original idea for a bridge crossing had been discussed in 1872 but it was recognised that a conventionally designed bridge would have impeded the progress of shipping up and down a busy river. So local bridge building company, Dorman Long, designed a bridge with a moving platform, which transported people across the waterway without blocking up the river. In effect, a cross between a ferry and a bridge. Construction costs totalled £68,000 and passengers were able to save the initial 1d fare by climbing 40' and walking across the footway (now closed).

It still operates successfully today taking passengers and vehicles from one riverbank to the other in less than 3 minutes. Just think of the six painters who climb the heights every seven years to slap on 250 gallons of paint!

*Go on.....take a ride on this towering symbol of engineering achievement. Truly, a triumphal steel arch for a town built on steel.*

#### **TO EXTEND THIS COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY TRAIL VISIT:**

##### **Newport Bridge**

Built 1834. To allow river traffic to pass unheeded the bridge carriageway was hoisted upwards to give a clearance of 120' above water.

**Stockton on Tees Barrage**

Opened 1995. The Barrage controls the flow of the River Tees. An eleven mile stretch of the river between Stockton and Yarm is kept at average "high tide" level which means that clean, non-tidal water from the Pennines does not mix with water coming in on the ebb and flow from the Teesmouth estuary. The result has been the creation of perfect conditions for leisure-based sports including fishing, windsurfing, jet ski-ing and white water canoeing.

**[For further information see www.visitmiddlesbrough.com](http://www.visitmiddlesbrough.com)**