

The postscript appears to be the most important line in the letter.

Raynes replied that he had no power to seek other legal advice, but, that, as agreement had already been reached in substance, there was no need for further delay. Acting on this assurance, the Local Board went ahead with its bill. One clause was very controversial, and threatened to hold up the whole bill. William Wright of West Bank had levied toll on every vehicle passing along Snig Lane (or Mersey Road) and using the Ferry. In this new bill, the Local Board proposed to abolish these tolls. Wright was a shareholder of the Gas and Water Company which felt bound to oppose this clause and could not be joint promoters of the bill. Eventually agreement was reached, the bill was duly promoted, and the result was The Widnes Improvement Act, 1867. By this act, the Local Board was empowered to supply with gas and water their district and places near thereto, and to purchase and acquire the undertaking, gas works, water works and property of the Widnes Gas and Water Company.

## II

### THE WIDNES TEMPERANCE HALL CO. LTD.

BY R. DICKINSON, B.Sc., Ph.D.

**T**HE Widnes Temperance Hall Company Limited was incorporated 24 May 1876 with the objects, *inter alia*, of purchasing land in Widnes and erecting thereon a temperance hall. The promoters, each subscribing for one share were John William Coxon, manufacturing chemist, Thomas Hughes, assistant teacher, Thomas Reay, blacksmith, Thomas Stanley, foreman at chemical works, Thomas Hulse, dockmaster, and Thomas Steele Swale, printer, all of Widnes, and James Irvine of Manchester, woollen draper. The capital was £2,500 in shares of one pound each.

On 1 June 1878 the company leased from the trustees of the will of John Hutchinson (William Norwood, James Cross and Thomas Part) 1,886 square yards of land bounded on the north by Ditton Road, Widnes, (60 feet), on the east side by property of the Runcorn & Widnes Co-operative Industrial & Providential Society Ltd. (277 feet), and on the south by the L.&N.W. Railway, (61 feet). The land was part of a larger

plot which had been purchased by Hutchinson 4 January 1862 from the Duchy of Lancaster. The lease to the company was for 999 years at a rent of £33 . 1 . 6 *per annum*.

The promoters failed in their efforts to obtain subscribers and building could not be commenced. They were fortunate enough to find "a gentleman of this town" who was prepared to take over the land and pay all the company's liabilities and consequently decided to wind up the company. With Peter Thompson as chairman and Coxon as secretary, meetings on 2 September 1878 passed and on 21 September confirmed, the resolutions that the company be wound up voluntarily, and that John Hargreaves be appointed liquidator. The final meeting was held 9 July 1880 and duly reported by John Hargreaves to the registrar of Joint Stock Companies, London.

The identity of the "gentleman of this town" has not been discovered. The secretary, John William Coxon, was employed by Golding, Davis & Co. Ltd., manufacturing chemists of Widnes, and eventually became the manager. The managing director and a founder of that concern was Richard Holden Davis (1845-1906), a life-long total abstainer; in his family the above mentioned lease was preserved until recently. It is tempting to regard Davis as the man who made himself responsible for the debts of the Widnes Temperance Hall Company, but he was a Liverpoolian who, so far as is known never resided in Widnes.

(References: Public Record Office; Defunct Companies, BT.31. 2239/10628.

Lancashire Record Office, Building Lease of 1878, DDX 298.)