

# River Don Steelworks

## 00 Gauge

### John Astley

The origins of Sheffield Forgemasters date back to the 1750s as a small blacksmith forge. George Naylor set up the foundations for the business as a commercial operation with the building of the Millsands Steelworks in 1805. His son in law, Edward Vickers, later joined forces with him to form Naylor Vickers and Co..

Since then the company has been associated with many famous steel industry names such as English Steel, Firth Brown, British Steel and River Don Castings.

Sheffield Forgemasters is now capable of producing the largest and most technically challenging cast and forged steel components in the world



Sheffield Forgemasters traces its origins to a 1750s blacksmith forge, and then Naylor Vickers and Co. founded by George Naylor and Edward Vickers- the predecessor of Vickers LTD<sup>1</sup> Vickers built the River Don Works in 1865.<sup>1</sup> In 1983, the River Don Works - then part of stateowned British steel - merged with firth brown steels to create Sheffield Forgemaster.

It had been a major armour plate rolling plant and during WW2, under the ownership of the English Steel Corporation (ESC), it had been worked hard. ESC invested heavily post war to bring the plant up to date. Nationalised in 1967, ESC being one of the big fourteen British iron & steel companies, it came very close to closure in the early 1970s when the BSC and, the still private, Firth Brown were sorting out who did, and owned what, in the Sheffield area. There was a dearth of orders for heavy castings, especially from the heavy electrical engineering industry.



In 1978  
it was  
part of  
BSCs  
Forges,

Foundries & Engineering, part of the Sheffield Division. The equipment at the plant was two, 12 tons/hour cold blast cupolas and two 8 ton induction furnaces, all for melting pig iron, total annual capacity 30,000 tons. Steel making facilities were one 90t and one 30t electric arc furnaces, total annual capacity 102,000 tons. There was some sort of vacuum degassing equipment, not sure what type, to improve the steel quality. One 10,000 ton, one 2,500 ton and two 1,300 ton forging presses. There were both iron and steel foundries, the casting pit being capable of castings up to 350 tons, heat treatment plants and various machine shops.

Plenty of scope, then, for a range of inwards traffic, pig iron, coke, limestone and scrap. I suspect, in reality that the coke (around 200-250 tons week) and limestone, possibly even the



pig  
iron,

arrived by road in the 1970's

River don was home to The River Don Engine, which was built by Davy Brothers of Sheffield in 1905 at Park Iron Works in Sheffield.

It was made to drive Charles Cammell's armour plate rolling mill located at his Grimesthorpe Works. Cammell's was one of the companies in the city that supplied the ship building industry with tough armour plate steel. At a weight of 400 tons and 12,000 horsepower, it enabled the huge mill to roll steel plate up to 40cm thick and 50 tons in weight.

The River Don Engine was one of four all built for the same purpose. The second went to John Brown's Atlas Works, the third to the Japanese government, and the fourth to Beardmores in Glasgow.

The River Don Engine ran at Cammell's mill for almost 50 years. The engine was then transferred to what was formerly known as the British Steel Corporation's River Don Works. At the Works, the engine continued to drive a heavy plate mill, producing products such as stainless steel reactor shields and steel plates for North Sea oil rigs.

In 1978, the engine ceased production and was transferred to the Kelham Island Museum site where it continues to run on steam as is the most powerful working steam engine remaining in Europe today



The layout, originally built by Dave Hall, is owned by John Astley..

Stock used is a mix of steam and diesel, the locos are all in different liveries from the 1940s-current day, like Corus rail. All repaints have been done by Repaints By Ben  
<https://www.facebook.com/RepaintsByBen/>

For more images go to: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/3050100385107537>

Conclusion: River Don has not been without it's challenges, a three way point failing followed by wiring issues, but this came out for the best as it gave us chance to extend the layout into a second fiddle yard.



Must be insured up to £500 excluding stock two tables required upon showing – full length including fiddle yards approx 12ft

This is a DC layout and requires 1-2 plug sockets.

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