

# HISTORY

**In the 1690's** the Haydock family, arrived in Liverpool from Warrington and Standish, establishing themselves as merchants. The population of Liverpool was then about 10,000 people, and the River Mersey lapped to their leased premises where India Buildings now stand.

**Kelly's 1<sup>st</sup> Directory** for Liverpool, 1765, refers to Roger Haydock, Great Cross Street, Linen Merchant. His Grandfather had emigrated to America on The Mayflower. Our direct ancestor William was a slate layer, thereby establishing early connections with tiling battens, the building trade and North Wales. His son was a dock gateman in 1801 when the first Liverpool Docks were still one of the wonders of the world. Timber was offloaded from America, the West Indies, Africa and the Baltic States.

Meanwhile Henry Haydock established a building company in about 1815. Henry Haydock & Co had, we understand, lime kilns in Lime Street and an association was forged with brickworks in Newton-le-Willows and the Haydock colliery. He made his fortune with the Liverpool/Manchester Railway. Haydock's were ever diversified.

Grandson Alfred moved across the Mersey and established a timber Merchants company from Rock Ferry in 1875, called Alfred Haydock & Co. Like many, Alfred fled from disease ridden Liverpool for healthier climes and we, as a family, have lived mainly on the Wirral ever since. Merging the firm as Haydock & Walsh in the 1890's, they struggled in the recession that marked the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Subsequently they moved back across the water acquiring premises in Great Howard Street close to the Liverpool Docks and the shipping industry that provided so much of their livelihood. The business has remained this side of the Mersey ever since.

Roger Algernon Haydock, who died in 1946, gave his name to the Company in 1912 which focused on cargo stowage and ship repair work. They met the tides, not the hours of the day. My father remembered being blown down river out to the Bar Lightship, with a horse-drawn load he was taking by ferry to Alfred Holts in Birkenhead, probably about 1919.

**The 1930's** were difficult for all on Merseyside, aggravated by Russian timber which was dumped unsold on the quayside in Liverpool year after year.

**In the Second World War** the demand for wood by both the Royal Navy and the convoys sailing from the Mersey was very great. Sadly with the Blitz, the premises in Great Howard Street were destroyed. At the behest of the Admiralty though, these were rebuilt in 1944. We were the only company in the Trade to be rebuilt during the War, which was a time of strictly enforced building material restrictions.

**As a boy** in the 1940's, I remember the thrill of travelling from Birkenhead to Liverpool on a Saturday to meet my grandfather at the office. I would climb the ladder leading to the roof of the Mill, then stand with the driver in the small cab of

the overhead crane. I seemed miles above the tightly packed machined wood and men below. By moving the accelerator, the crane cranked into action, lifting the large round elm and oak logs from the Wye Valley and Llangollen. In reality this was an escape into a different, exciting world; the timber trade was ever as such.

Because of containerisation, the company moved from cargo work to packaging, importing volumes of Russian wood; low Utkskott grade especially. In those days, the Mersey bound Russian timber fleet could number 70 vessels each year compared with a mere handful of today. In the 1950's, there were 60 similar Companies, where now there are possibly 4. It was claimed that hardly a ship left the port without the carpenter taking 25 cubic metres of new wood on board. Some boarded the ships on the Manchester ship canal at Ellesmere Port and got off at Runcorn with their orders!

As the Port contracted and its related industrial infrastructure diminished, the company's new horizon was Europe, with Russian and Scandinavian timbers shipped via the East Coast Ports and delivered via the new M62.

**In 1969**, needing space to lay out Russian Stock and unable to purchase land in the Liverpool Dock Area, we left Sandhills Lane, Bootle, with its three timber yards. My Father, Roger Harvey, discovered and arranged for the present site at Widnes.

We changed direction and introduced Merchanting Branches in Ellesmere Port, Mold, Denbigh, Llandudno, Liverpool, Warrington and Stockport. We searched for a new identity as UK packaging exports suffered. The agenda, now changed to Merchanting and joinery. The Widnes Mill was planned for timber window and stair components supplemented by Hardwood and Sheet Material Departments. Regular devaluation made timber trading good through most of the 60's and 70's. Harold Wilson, the magician from nearby Huyton, kept the rabbits coming out of the hat but the trade of the 1980's headed for a more difficult period of generally lower prices and the arrival of UPVC created a very competitive environment.

We now sought the new DIY, home improvement market, in contrast to carcassing and building timber where, outside a boom, we could no longer see a profit. The worldwide effort of sourcing wood, with its story, its history, and its multitude of shapes in joinery has always had a fascination.

The setbacks of the early 1990's, namely rapid changes in interest rates, falling commodity prices, technological change and fierce competition, exposed the high risk in the traditional timber importing concept. As a result, we divested ourselves of some of the Merchanting Companies and sought out new growth markets.

**Quality milling and treatments** were developed to add value. Diversification followed into hardwoods and Joinery Softwoods and on to include Pole Ladders and Office Furniture, using all timber based components. We now focus additionally on the Access Industry supplementing the ladders with aluminium stagings and steel ladders. Furniture for use means different forms of desks and types of office furniture. Our branches at Liverpool, Colwyn Bay and Whitchurch

have added a layer of activity as we have moved towards kitchens, floorings and the garden in each of the three locations.

A New World, new ideas to carry forward but still a responsible and reliable business.

It is our belief that the new types of businesses aligned with the old, to which we are committed, can be continued here on Merseyside. It requires different forms of investment and management from previous times. The Roger Haydock name has always been synonymous with a given commitment to service; in fact it has been the hallmark of the Company throughout the years.

**Our fifth generation**, namely Roger Andrew Haydock continues to bring to the market a range of 21<sup>st</sup> century wood based and allied products, responsibly produced to a standard and quality equal to the best.

Our newest additions are our Doors Division (specialising in producing PAS 23/24 timber and composite doors for the Social Housing Market) and the Trailer Division (supplying wood for trailer bottoms already cut into kits)

**Roger David Haydock, Chairman**