

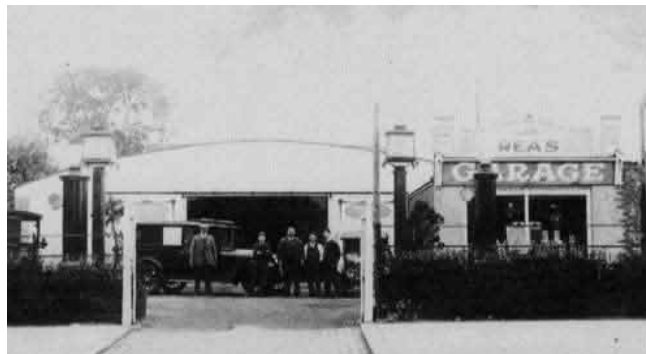
# The part my family played in local history

I'm writing this introduction as an AS-Level history student at Strathearn School, but when I was in third year my teacher set an assignment on early industrial North East Ulster. Having heard tales from my relatives at Christmas parties etc. about my great-grandparent's generation, I decided to interview official members of my family and treat their accounts as historical sources. My teacher recently approached me about putting my project online, to show their contributions to an area of local history. Here is a summary of the assignment. . .

On my mother's side, I looked at my great-grandfather who was something of an entrepreneur in his time. I interviewed my granny (his daughter) and decided to pursue the line of enquiry surrounding his petrol station and garage- the first in Northern Ireland! Granny said it was a very big thing at the time, it even made the papers!



She was able to offer these photographs of the station in the 1930's,



Can you determine how I deduced in what order the photos were taken?



Here's one of my great-grandfather's 'side projects' linked in with the garaged. . . he owned the first 'Charabanc' in Northern Ireland, a type of motor coach which took people on tours round the coast.

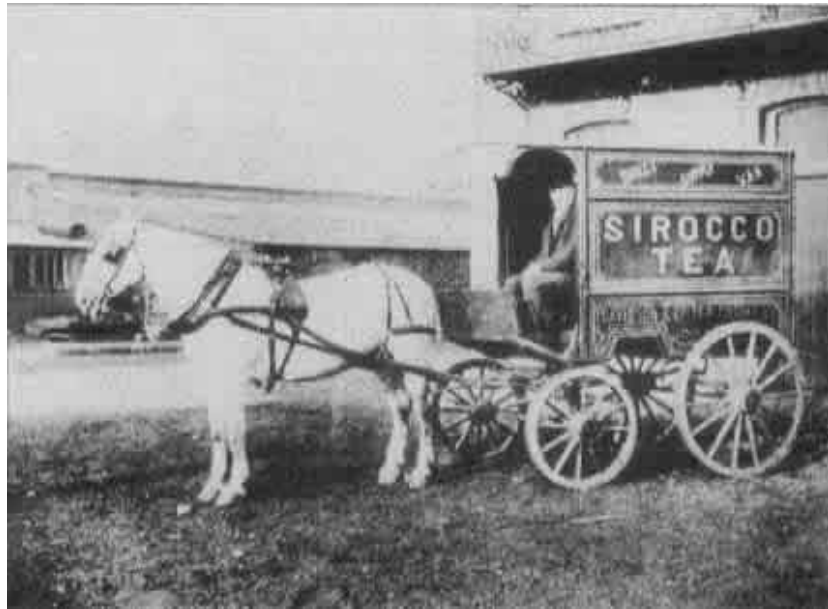
I was curious to know what the site of the garage was like today. My granny said it changed hands in 1945, and I imagine has many times since then because now it's. . .



. . . a SHELL station! And that's me outside, proudly holding the day's newspapers.

I went inside to speak to the owner to see if he could shed any more light on the station. He confirmed it was the first in Northern Ireland, but claimed that a *Mr. Scott* owned the station first, but my great-grandfather was a *Mr. Rea*. He said that *Mr. Scott's* grand-daughter runs it today. I didn't want to argue with the man! I know history isn't history without counter-argument, but I could evaluate my sources and conclude that infact my great-grandfather owned it first.

On my father's side I researched my *other* great-grandfather. He and his son (my grandfather) were on the board of directors at 'Sirocco Works' (or Davidsons) as it used to be called. Sirocco started off with tea plantations all over the world. . .



... that involved his travelling a lot because he was in charge of research (my father recalled).



This was my grandfather's office, he was at the top right.

More into my grandfather's time was when Sirocco began to produce fans, for the likes of mines etc. The company expanded a lot when they made fans and had branches all over the world. the one rival they had according to my dad, was *Howdens of Scotland* and the competition was fierce!

I was not one bit surprised to discover that my great-grandfather, my grandfather *and* my father had all once worked in Harland and Wolff shipyard, an industry which has dominated North East Ulster (particularly Belfast) for over a century. This is a very important part of local history, and no doubt many my age had grandparents working there.



**Here are the cranes today, looking unimpressive next to modern large buildings, yet very much still a part of the Belfast skyline.**

**If it had not been for this project, I would never have asked my relatives about these characters from my family's past, and managed to consolidate all this information. It was enlightening and inspiring, encouraging me to ask more questions of people I know. . . while I still can.**