

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

David G. Edwards

On reading the article by F.H. Baker in the Winter 1995 issue of the *Bulletin* (Volume 12:6) I noted an obvious error in the section entitled 'The new by-product coke oven plant'. I checked the description of the plant that had appeared in *Iron and Coal Trades Review*, Vol. 115, 22 July 1927, pp.128-131, only to find that Mr Baker's account corresponded practically verbatim with that description, apart from a few omissions and some of his own additions. The central photograph on p.55 of the *Bulletin* also appears in the ICTR article. It is of course possible that that article and Mr Baker's account were both based on a common document prepared by the colliery company or the Koppers Co. (there is no apostrophe in "Koppers").

The error is in the statement on p.54: "The ovens . . . burn off in a period of two to three hours . . ." . Correctly this should be "21 to 22 hours". One omission is the information that the waste heat ovens erected in 1913 were at "B" Winning Colliery, not 'A' Winning. Of Mr Baker's own additions, the statement on p.56: 'Short coking periods can only be obtained . . . decomposition of gas and tar' is not exactly true: other designs of oven with the same width as those at Blackwell were quite capable of giving good results without excessive temperatures. However, Mr Baker's information about the supply of gas to Derby is useful; in 1927 this arrangement had not yet come into being and the surplus gas was sent to the colliery boilers.

This was the first large-scale installation of the Koppers vertical-taper ovens in Britain. The Blackwell plant gained some further distinction in 1935 by the addition of 18 more Koppers ovens, this time designed for heating by producer gas if desired, to release more coke oven gas for sale as town gas; this was the first use of producer gas for this purpose at a *colliery* coking plant in Britain. The whole plant was finally shut down in February 1956.

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