

THE LOCAL PHILANTHROPY OF THE RECKITT FAMILY,
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO HULL GARDEN VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT

Sir James Reckitt, a Quaker, Chairman of Reckitt & Sons, Limited, a manufacturer of laundry and household products based in Kingston upon Hull, was well known as a local philanthropist. Philanthropy, perhaps combined with fear of social unrest, but with a firm foundation of his own experience in public life, provided the impetus for Sir James Reckitt to build Hull Garden Village, commencing in 1907.

A range of house sizes was rented to the workforce and others, within walking distance of Reckitt's factories. Local architects Runton & Barry supervised all aspects of the building and village layout. Community feeling was encouraged in social events, sports and gardening for men and women. Reckitt family members donated a club house, shopping centre, village hall and almshouses.

Hull Garden Village was built largely as the vision of one man, with significant input from family members, using personal financial resources gained as a major employer in a large port. Almost a century later, it remains a pleasant and sought-after residential area.

KEYWORDS

Philanthropy, Reckitt, Hull Garden Village, Workers' Housing, Quaker, Public Health

INTRODUCTION

Reckitt & Sons, Limited was one of the major employers in Hull, properly known as Kingston upon Hull, in the early twentieth century, with Sir James Reckitt its Chairman in alternate years with his brother Francis who was living in London. A Quaker, he was well known in Hull, a large north-east coast port, as a philanthropist. He was active in the Liberal Party. Using experience as a County Alderman and from his other philanthropic work he built Hull Garden Village for his employees and others, commencing in 1907.

Hull Garden Village may still be visited, although it has now become part of the main body of the City of Kingston-upon-Hull. A desirable place to live, it lies on a bus route about one mile east of the City centre. Many houses, the Village Hall and a shop were destroyed by bombing in the Second World War. All were rebuilt with the exception of the Village Hall.¹

A considerable body of literature exists locally on the history of the Village although it is only briefly mentioned in many standard works on Garden Cities. This paper concentrates on the early years of the Village and touches on the motivation for Sir James Reckitt to build it.

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Reckitt & Sons, Limited manufactured household products such as laundry starch and blue bags for whitening laundry. The Reckitt family had been Quakers since the father of Thomas Reckitt of Lea was converted by George Fox on his visit to Lincolnshire in about 1660 (Chapman-Huston 1927: 30).

In 1840 the family, headed by Isaac Reckitt, moved from Nottingham to Hull, and rented a starch mill in Dansom Lane (Reckitt, B. 1965: 1). In 1840, 25 girls were employed in a single factory (Reckitt, B. 1965: 97). In 1849 James Reckitt entered the business (Reckitt, B. 1965: 97). In 1888 a public company was formed (Reckitt, B. 1965: 47).

By 1910 the company operated in North and South America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand (Reckitt, B. 1965: 101) and Africa (Reckitt, B. 1965: 99).

The period during which Hull Garden Village was conceived and developed was during what Hobsbawm described as a 'belle époque', the fifteen years between 1899 and 1914. It was a time when, 'economically, the shadows of the years of the Great Depression lifted, to give way to the brilliantly sunny expansion and prosperity of the 1900s.' (Hobsbawm 1987: 276-7). Despite, 'the sudden emergence of mass working-class parties dedicated to revolution...life was exceeding attractive for those who had money.'



Plate 1: Sir James Reckitt (in white hat) opening Hull Garden Village, 1 July 1908, (photo reproduced by permission of Reckitt Benckiser plc)

(Hobsbawm 1987: 276-7). However, the Boer War, 1899-1902 had encouraged a 'rising interest in social reform... [as] an unhealthy and poverty-afflicted nation was a weak nation' (Lloyd 1979: 15).

The concept of the garden city had been underway for some time before Sir James Reckitt proposed such a possibility for his own workforce in Hull in February 1907 by letter to his colleague, Thomas Ferens (Chapman-Huston 1927: 238), a Liberal MP.

The garden city movement is generally attributed to the work of Ebenezer Howard whose books on the model community were in print from 1898 and who attracted influential people including George Cadbury and Joseph Rowntree, Quaker chocolate manufacturers, to support the development of his ideas (Beevers 1989: 27). Howard wrote: 'Town and Country must be married and out of this joyous union will spring a new hope, a new life and a new civilisation' (Oliver 1981: 29).

In a speech at the ceremony of laying the first brick on 1 November 1907 Reckitt said that: 'the idea came to him as a duty about a year ago that he should do something to benefit those who had not such a nice garden as himself' (*Hull News* 2.11.1907).

It would be incorrect to believe that nothing had been happening in Hull on building better homes for the working classes. In 1900, the Chairman of the Unhealthy Dwellings Sub-Committee was appointed to attend a conference on housing in London (*Hull San. Cttee* 1899-1900.V: 514). In 1901 the City Council sought tenders for workmen's housing on 80ft long plots and fourteen tenders were considered at a City Improvement (Workmen's Dwellings) Sub-Committee meeting (*Hull City Impr. Cttee* 1901.VI: 56).

Ebenezer Howard's ideas on planned new towns, bringing together the advantages of town and country living, were discussed at the Garden City Conference in 1901 (Burnett 1986: 292) in the garden village of Bourneville, built by the Quaker Cadbury family of chocolate manufacturers in Birmingham.

A direct result of the conference was the building of Letchworth, Hertfordshire from 1903 on farmland under the direction of architects Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin (Burnett 1986: 292-3). There, The Garden City Pioneer Co. Ltd laid out roads, parks and industrial sites loosely based on Howard's schematic drawings of circular zones. Knox maintains that Liberals supported the scheme because it supported land-use control and centralised planning; conservatives supported it because it gave private enterprise space to provide housing (Knox 1987: 50).

New Earswick, near York, was commissioned by Joseph Rowntree, a Quaker chocolate manufacturer, as a direct result of Howard's 1902 book, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (Knox 1987: 50-51). Ashworth, however, considers that 'it was obviously based on the example of Bourneville' (Ashworth 1968: 140).

It is apparent that Reckitt had been interested in housing from before 1884 (*Homes* 1884: 52). James Reckitt was aware of the building of garden cities, two of which had been built by large Quaker employers. A party of 48 Reckitt

employees visited Bourneville on 7 December 1907, viewing the Meeting House, Ruskin Hall, Village Green, Almshouses, schools and comprehensive sporting facilities. Their report stated, 'if our Garden Village turns out to be anything like Bourneville, it will be a pleasure to live in it' (*Reckitts'* I.8.1907: 89-91).

Two buildings in Letchworth were sponsored by a member of the Reckitt family. In 1907 Juliet Reckitt, daughter of Sir James's brother, George, paid for the Friends Meeting House (Miller 2002: 83). This was under construction on a visit by a Reckitt employee in 1907 to the Housing Exhibition (*Reckitts'* I.9.1908: 95-6). In 1908 the Girls Club, sponsored by Juliet, was opened in a new wing of the Howard Hall (Miller 2002: 86), a memorial to Mrs Howard (*Reckitts'* I.9.1908: 95).

At the Hull Garden Village opening ceremony held on 1 July 1908, its architect, Mr P.T. Runton of local firm, Runton & Barry, spoke. He referred to a recent visit to Hull by one of the Letchworth directors, who had said that Hull Garden Village would be the model village of its class in England (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3).

Moreover, Sir James said that half of the site would have to be sold off and he would be happy to sell it at cost price to a body of workmen or others who would build an estate (along the lines of a garden city) similar to those in Hampstead or Ealing. There, he said, a workman could buy his house by paying rent of, say, £20 per year, and occupy it in old age (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3). This was an important point, as before the introduction of the Welfare State, possibilities were limited for the aged poor.

PLANS FOR THE VILLAGE

In February 1907 Sir James Reckitt, Bart., wrote a letter to his fellow director, Mr Thomas Ferens, indicating that he wished to build a garden village for his employees. He aimed, 'to provide a house and a good garden for the same rent as is now paid for inferior houses with no garden at all' (*Reckitt* 1924: 82). The letter expanded on his plans:

It seems to me that the time has come, either alone, or in conjunction with some members of the Board, to establish a Garden Village, within a reasonable distance of our Works, so that those who are wishful might have the opportunity of living in a better house, with a garden, for the same rent that they now pay for a house in Hull – with the advantages of fresher air, and such Clubs and out-door amusements, as are usually found in rural surroundings (*Chapman-Huston* 1927: 238).

At the ceremony of laying the first brick Reckitt said he was quite sure that most workmen were fond of a garden, and he wished to give them the opportunity of having one; the cultivation of vegetables and flowers was a healthy and pleasant recreation (*Hull News* 2.11.1907).

Basil Reckitt, in his recent book, *The Garden Village, Hull, a History*, quotes Sir James' letter to Mr Ferens:

One suitable estate I have in view would cost £70,000 of which £20,000 or £30,000 might be sold off; there are one or two smaller properties which might be had but not so advantageous for the purpose. Probably the best plan would be to form a Private Company to manage the Estate, the Articles and Memorandum would set forth the purposes and lay down the rules and as I am prepared, if necessary, to subscribe £100,000 the project will no doubt go on but I would not feel comfortable did I not give you and some others the opportunity of joining in and getting some pleasure and satisfaction out of it (*Reckitt, B.* 2002: 2).

Sir James Reckitt, 'invested one hundred and fifty thousand pounds' in The Garden Village (Hull) Ltd, the company set up to build and run the village' (*Chapman-Huston* 1927: 239).

He, 'devoted the dividends from fifty thousand pounds of his share capital to the benefit of the village' (*Chapman-Huston* 1927: 239). As Reckitt pointed out at the opening of the Village on 1 July 1908, 'in fact that company [Reckitt & Sons, Ltd] as a company *per se*, had nothing at all to do with that undertaking [although] some of the directors were shareholders' (*Eastern* 2.7.1908:3). Reckitt's proposal for a garden village was reported in *The Times* on 29 March 1907.

Not only had James Reckitt been thinking about housing for a considerable time before the building of Hull Garden Village in 1907, but also he wrote on philanthropy. Having read aloud to his family the book *Ecce Homo*, published anonymously in 1865 by Sir Robert Seeley, a Cambridge professor, Reckitt wrote, 'it is very interesting reading and its inculcation of philanthropy cannot fail to do good I think, as it is a part of Christianity much neglected in my opinion, even by professing christians' (*Chapman-Huston* 1927: 173).

At the 1884 Homes of the People Conference, held in Hull, it emerged that Reckitt had already experimented with workers' housing (*Homes* 1884: 52). As one of the instigators of the conference, attended by 'professional men, magistrates, councillors, and representative men of all classes,' Reckitt stated that:

A few years since [he] spent several thousand pounds in the erection of about thirty cottages...model houses with every practicable sanitary arrangement, each house with three separate bedrooms, some [with] one living room and scullery, others with two rooms downstairs (*Homes* 1884: 52).

He pointed to 'the remarkable health of the occupiers,' although 'the cost per house was much more than in ordinary dwellings.' Moreover, a return of four to five percent was realised, thus providing 'some encouragement to

others' considering this mode of investment (*Homes* 1884: 52). Thus, he proved to himself that building good houses for workpeople was not only humanitarian, it was an investment.

Reckitt added that, 'Although objecting to communistic theories, he saw no objection to [Hull Corporation] building blocks of dwellings for the poor' (*Homes* 1884: 52). He used almost the same words at the 1884 conference as he did in his letter to Ferens in 1907, 'I am sure they require more holidays, more out-of-door amusements in the fresh air and green fields' (*Homes* 1884: 40).

Councillor Rayment's written statement to the conference commented on benefit societies in Hull, which lent funds on mortgage at five percent. If they used part of their reserve to build blocks bearing the name of their respective societies, 'a block of 50 rooms could be built for £2,000 and let at 1s 3d per week [which] would yield 8%.' (*Homes* 1884: 56-57)

Had it been possible to follow up his suggestion, much new working class housing could have been built – for a good return, 8 per cent. Indeed, the need for Sir James Reckitt's Garden Village some twenty years later may never have arisen. Councillor Rayment was present at the opening of the Garden Village (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3).

Poor housing was not the only issue. The attractions of the public house compounded the problem. Mr H.F. Smith, JP stated that £135,000,000 was spent in a single year in Hull on alcoholic drink, twice the sum spent on bread and flour (*Homes* 1884: 19). More than 50 'Hotels, Inns & Taverns' were within walking distance of the Reckitt factories in 1906 (*Kelly's* 1906: 521-24).

LAND FOR THE VILLAGE

A plot of 130 acres for the building of Hull Garden Village was purchased in 1907 from the Jalland family, who resided in Holderness House, on the main road from Hull in a north-easterly direction, within walking distance of the Reckitt factories, described as:

a fine old park and hall known as Holderness House Estate...on one of the main roads and tram routes, and near to the East Park. Within easy reach are schools, places of worship and public baths and libraries, and a more suitable site could hardly have been chosen (*Reckitt's* I.8.1907: 87).

Reckitt may have heard of the land being available as both he and Walter Clay Jalland were East Riding of Yorkshire JPs. Reckitt qualified as a JP on 29 June 1886 (*Names* 1911: 2). Mr Jalland's name appears from 1891 in the Quarter Sessions records (*Order Book*: 1891-1904).

Only about a half of the 130 acres was used for the Garden Village, as the rest was sold off for building or to the Reckitt company for sports fields (*Reckitt, B.* 2002: 5-6).

Selection of this site in particular was almost unavoidable. The map of Hull (*Bacon* 1906) reveals that the city was closely built up west of the river Hull, and extended along a few miles of the river Humber. Insufficient land was available in west Hull. East of the river Hull, land was built up as far east as the Holderness House estate, including railways and docks. The estate was convenient and had an electric tram service. It was the ideal, and only, site for this venture.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The public health situation in Hull is set out in some detail to emphasise the difference in the standard of housing provided in the village, in comparison with the housing of the working classes elsewhere in Hull.

Why should Reckitt have considered it necessary for him to build a village? He had considerable understanding of the health issues related to housing and disease from his work as an Alderman for East Riding County Council, based at Beverley, near Hull, on Committees dealing with health and education. He was also engaged on other philanthropic projects in areas of health and education not covered in this paper.

At the time of building the Garden Village, people living in the central, densely populated part of Hull had the problems of smoke and smells, poor hygiene and disease.

Animals – pigs and horses – in particular, were kept near to housing, as well as offensive trades, including butchery, fish processing and tanning. The municipal Sanitary Committee attempted to keep these under control.

In 1900 the Inspector of Nuisances reported to his fortnightly sub-committee 96 inspections of offensive trades; 30 observations of smoke nuisance; 62 pigsties inspected and 20 cleansing orders (*Hull San. Cttee* 1899-1900.V: 636).

Eight years later, when Hull Garden Village was opened, the Nuisance Committee met monthly, reporting 248 inspections of offensive trades (*Hull San. Cttee* 1907-1908.V: 415).

Nightsoil was another problem. Few working class houses had water closets. A sophisticated system of nightsoil collection was run by the Sanitary Committee, whose meetings were attended by the Medical Officer of Health and Inspector of Nuisances. For the four weeks ended 2 November 1907, the date of the laying of the first brick of the Garden Village, 48,000 collections from privies were made (*Hull San. Cttee* 1907-1908.V: 25).

Many who could afford it moved out of Hull. Sir James moved west out of Hull, buying Swanland Manor in 1884 (*Reckitt* 1965: 42), with extensive gardens. Situated on chalk Wolds, this high ground enjoyed better air and good drainage (*Crowther* 1985: 137).

Hull is situated in a low-lying position on damp soil, bounded by a major river estuary, with a river running through the town. In the 1740s much of the open field system was enclosed and drained for pasture, in what became known

later as East Hull (Forster 1972: 54), where the Garden Village was built. Parts of the town flooded occasionally before the erection of a Tidal Barrier on the river Hull adjacent to the Humber, in 1980 (Pevsner 1995: 524). In 1890 serious floods occurred in the populous Drypool and Sculcoates areas after the River Hull overflowed (*Bulmer's* 1892: 772).

Problems with housing, flooding, smells and sanitation were reflected in health statistics. The population was increasing considerably. In 1900 it was estimated at 238,736 (Hull San. Cttee 1899-1900.V: 627); by 1908 it was 271,137 (Hull San. Cttee 1907-08.V: 352). The increase was 32,401 in eight years, over 11 per cent.

Infant mortality rate, an indicator of the health of the population, was high. In 1900 it was 184 per 1,000 live births (Patrick 1981: 326-7) compared with 142 nationally (Statistics 1995: 34). These figures had improved by 1910 to 135 (Patrick 1981: 326-7) and 110 (Statistics 1995: 34) respectively.

Infectious diseases spread quickly. In 1908 in a four week period hospital admissions included Scarlatina 24 and Diphtheria 8 (Hull San. Cttee 1907-1908.V: 348).

To illustrate the closely built housing in inner Hull, surrounded by its ring of docks, in 1899 the Old Town and Inner Myton School Board District contained 4,867 houses, with 2,988 children on school registers. This area had 'many Warehouses and Families living up-stairs' (School Board 1898-1901, Byelaws Cttee Rep: 4). On the eastern side of the River Hull, Crowle Street Board School, with 1,000 pupils (VCH 1969: 363), near the Reckitt factories, was closed for a month for disinfection following 81 cases of measles (Hull San. Cttee 1899-1900: 530).

The Unhealthy Dwellings Sub-Committee, attended by the Medical Officer of Health listed many dwellings under orders for improvement or demolition (Hull San. Cttee 1899-1900.V: 60). Seven years later when the Garden Village was begun, the Sub-Committee was still issuing closing orders on unfit property, 'damp, without proper sanitary conveniences and in a state so dangerous and injurious to health as to be...unfit for habitation' (Hull San. Cttee 1907-1908.V: 33).

Sir James Reckitt, as an Alderman on East Riding County Council was appointed by the Sanitary and Allotments Committee to attend, as a representative of the Council, the British Congress on Tuberculosis in London in 1901 (E. Riding *Mins* 1899-1900: 355). This would have given him additional insight into the problems of the disease, although it affected all layers of society. In Hull 'pulmonary consumption' caused 25 deaths in four weeks (Hull San. Cttee 1907-1908.V: 351). *Reckitts Magazine* carried an article on the treatment of TB in the Girls' Temperance Society section. TB was thought to be caused by the damp British weather, and the dirty milk supply from unwashed cows exacerbated by alcohol consumption (*Reckitts' IV.11.1911: 140*).

The occupants of Hull Garden Village were families who could enjoy a healthier life than in inner Hull.

THE GARDEN VILLAGE: BUILDINGS

A number of sizes of house were built in the village, at varying rentals, so that all grades of worker, as well as others not employed by Reckitts, could be accommodated within their means. At the opening ceremony on 1 July 1908, Sir James said, 'we do not wish, by any means, that the whole of the village shall be occupied by workers at Reckitt' (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3).

Indeed, no pressure would be put on the workforce to move there. By the opening there were three applications for each house built (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3). In contrast to most working class accommodation in Hull, the houses had water closets and baths, reliable (gravity fed) hot water systems (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 183), good sized rooms and plenty of windows. Details aimed at reducing maintenance were included; iron gateposts and locks with no springs (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 183).

Reckitt's Magazine laid out details of houses to be built, such as, 'House of the First Class facing the Oval. Plot of land 475 sq.yards - Block No. 1. - s/det. Est. rental £19.0.0. Rates approx. £6.15.0. 3 beds' (*Reckitts' I.8.1907: 87*).

Housing in Hull Garden Village had some similarity to that of Bourneville in Birmingham, begun in 1879, 'rows of housing and communal facilities set on winding landscaped roads' (Roth 1993: 442).

McDaid quotes Rowntree's requirements of architects, Parker and Unwin for New Earswick, 'artistic in appearance, sanitary, well-built and yet within the means of men earning about twenty-five shillings a week' (McDaid 1991: 30).

The Hull Garden Village housing is said to lack the 'picturesqueness of Port Sunlight [near Liverpool] or the originality of New Earswick' (Pevsner 1995: 564). Architectural styles in New Earswick had an influence on the design of Hull Garden Village (Pevsner 1995: 563), 'clearly influenced' by C. F.A. Voysey (Pevsner 1995: 102), a well-known architect of large, individually designed houses in the vernacular style.

Front and back gardens were provided, with back roads on which to take carts, possibly with manure for growing vegetables (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 184). Gardens were intended to be large. The reporter of the ceremony of laying the first brick, stated that, 'The houses are to have from 400 to 500 yards of land, it being an acknowledged fact that 400 yards of land attached to a house is worth 2s a week in produce to the tenant' (*Hull News* 2.11.1907).

The houses were to be built at a density of not more than twelve to the acre (*Reckitts' I.8.1907: 87*). Reckitt's speech at the ceremony of laying the first brick indicated that front gardens should be filled only with 'plants and flowers, which will naturally beautify the village' (*Hull News* 2.11.1907). Fences and hedges provided boundaries and a more rural feel. This impression was to be reinforced by the laying of 'asphalte' on the roads and paths to produce a 'clean, wholesome road free from dust...more of a rural appearance than...flagged footpaths' (*Reckitts' I.8.1907: 87*).

However, the City Engineer considered that 'tar macadam' should only be used outside detached or semi-detached houses, and that the Corporation

should be paid the sum required to make good any defects in the surface if the Corporation were to take the Garden Village streets over (Hull Works Cttee 1907-8: 56), indicating that initially the Corporation was not intending to maintain the streets.

Services taken for granted today were installed in the Garden Village: 'Town water and gas are laid on, and also the municipal telephones' (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 184).

Lighting was by mains gas (*Village* 1913: 6). Coal for heating and cooking was kept in a coal house near the back door. As the architects, Runton & Barry, had control over the building of the entire village they were able to avoid excessive road digging to lay services (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 183), in contrast to speculative building elsewhere (*Village* 1913: 5).

Gas street lighting was discussed between the architects and the local authority:

The City Engineer begs to report that...Runton & Barry...have had lamps fixed at the ordinary intervals, and their idea is that the Corporation should pay for as many as possible, and that the Trust should pay for any further number required (Hull Works Cttee 1907-1908: 177).

The tone of this report indicates that relations may have been strained at times. The same meeting refused to approve the club house street lighting plans (Hull Works Cttee 1907-1908: 176).

The layout of the village roads and the placing of the houses along them were very important.

A 'City and County of Kingston upon Hull Bye-law with respect to new streets 1909' was negotiated with Hull Corporation and the Local Government Board, which allowed the widths of roads to be varied, through, 'the suspension of certain bye-laws and the enactment of special bye-laws' (*Reckitts'* I.8.1907: 87).

Contrary to the straight roads of terraced houses which were being built at the time, some near the Reckitt factories, Hull Garden Village roads were designed to incorporate curves, providing visual interest and sunshine from different directions. Roads were named after trees, such as May Tree Avenue. Flowering cherry trees were planted in the footpath of Cherry Tree Avenue. Lime trees were planted in the footpath of Lime Tree Avenue. London Planes and Norway Maples were planted in the footpaths of Laburnum Avenue and Lilac Avenue, while laburnum trees were planted in front gardens in Laburnum Avenue (Houlton). A shopping centre, club house and village hall together with three sets of almshouses and a girls' hostel, were built in Tudor and Georgian Classical Revival styles (*List* 1994: 141).

The village hall, built in mock Tudor style, with a high cruck beamed roof

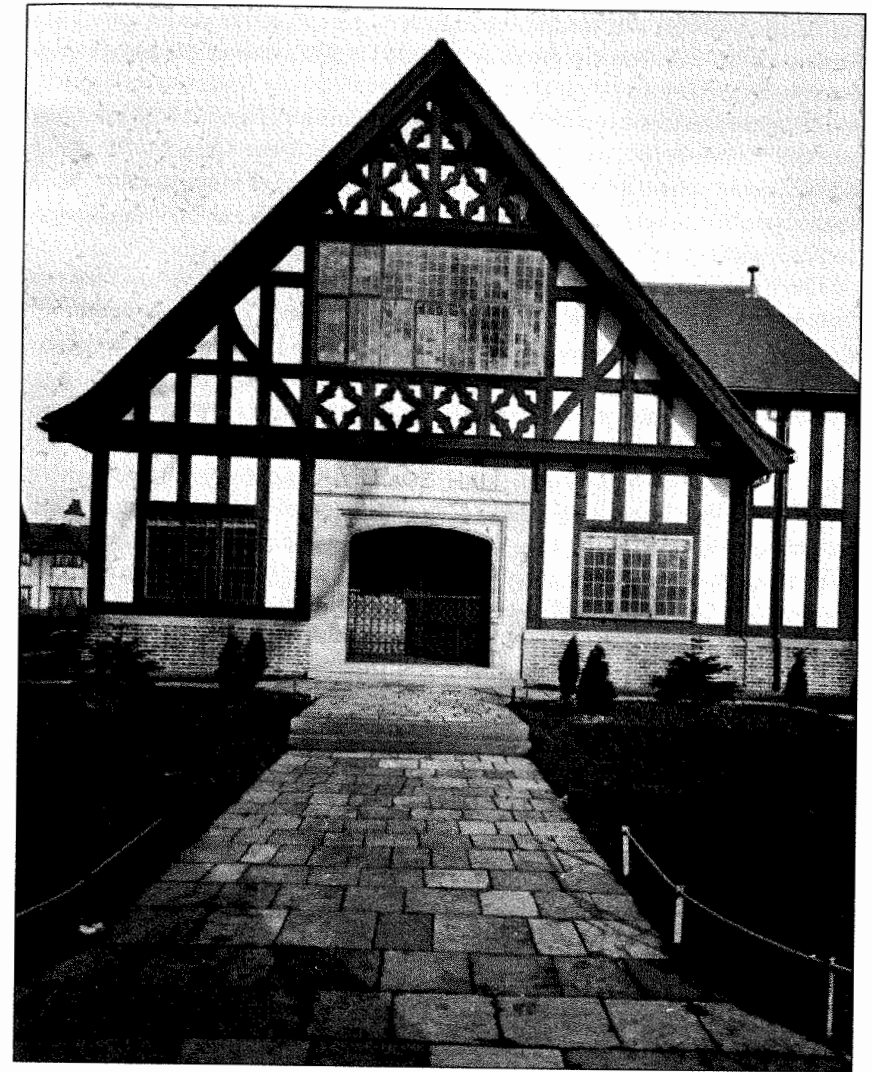


Plate 2: Village Hall, Hull Garden Village
(photo reproduced by permission of Reckitt Benckiser plc)

like an old English barn, seated 400. Opened by Sir James on 22 October 1910, 'in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,' it was intended to be of a religious character. He said that it was, 'not by accident that...beautiful homes...restful vicarages, the stately homes...had turned out Ruskins, Kingsleys, Newtons, and Darwins' (*Reckitts'* IV.6.1910: 77) He continued that, 'the poorer classes suffered not only from lack of means, but from poverty of spirit...Sixty per cent of the total cost of lunacy and a great deal of crime, debility, and despondency were due to surroundings' (*Reckitts'* IV.6.1910: 77). A magnificent organ was donated by Kathleen, wife of Sir James. He built the hall as a thank offering for his recovery from a serious illness (Reckitt 1924: 83). The

first Village Concert was held at the Hall on 4 January 1911 under the chairmanship of Mr P.B. Reckitt (*Reckitts'* IV.9.1911: 120), one of Sir James's sons (Reckitt, B. 1951: 46).

Religious services were held at the Hall on Sundays from 1911 by ministers from the various denominations in East Hull, including the Church of England and Nonconformists (*Reckitts'* IV.9.1911:120). The Band of Hope, a temperance organisation, met there fortnightly. There was also a Choral Society (*Builder* 7.2.1913: 184).

The twentyfirst anniversary booklet produced in 1932 for the hall contains photographs and an account of the numerous bodies operating within it, including Brownies, Guides and a Women's Social Hour, whose members enjoyed lectures and musical concerts (*Souvenir* 1932).

Overlooking The Oval, situated in Elm Avenue, with its mature trees and rhododendrons, the single storey club house has a semi-circular ashlar portico with Roman Ionic columns and steps, providing an impressive entrance with a six-panel double door. The building is rectangular, with cream stucco and decorative brickwork around the windows, known as flat arches and keystones. A domed cupola surmounts the tiled roof (*List* 1994: 141). The Department of Heritage Grade II listing describes the club house as Georgian Classical Revival in style (*List* 1994: 141). However, Pevsner describes it as built in 'a bland Wrenaissance style' (Pevsner 1995: 563).

The club house was given by Albert L. Reckitt, in memory of his father George, a brother of Sir James (Reckitt, B. 1951: 61). It contained a billiards room, games room, library, lounge and a reading room with a grand domed window at the end (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 184). The provision of a good quality building and these activities was a realistic attempt to replace the nearby public houses. Reckitt hoped, 'it would take the place of the ordinary public house. They were not rabid teetotallers, but they agreed at any rate that drink was not a necessity' (*Reckitts'* IV.6.1910: 78).

The club subscription was 5s per annum for each resident, with a membership of over 250 (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 184). High ceilings, tall fireplaces, tiled in rich green and red gave the club house an imposing air. A handsome corridor with archways and plaster decoration ran almost the length of the building, with rooms opening off. At the rear was a childrens' play area (Jones 1993). The play area had swings, giant strides and sand-pits (*Builder* 7.2.1913: 184). Mr and Mrs Frederic Reckitt gave £50 'to form the nucleus of a library for the Club House' (*Reckitts'* IV.6.1910: 79).

The *Trust Deed between The Garden Village (Hull) Ltd and A. L. Reckitt Esq.* dated 23 December 1910 contains a provision that 'no billiards or other games are to be played on the premises on Sundays.' This provision reflected the religious and rest day status of Sunday, although a report of the death of Sir James's friend, Lord Nunburnholme, the shipping magnate of the Wilson Line in Hull, indicated that a measure he advocated in his election speech as a Liberal MP for West Hull, Sunday closing, was not yet law (*Hull News* 2.11.1907: 11). Reckitt's colleague, Ferens, was in the Central Sunday Closing Association (*Hull News*

2.11.1907: 10). Quaker belief is that every day is important and should be lived well and properly and they do not single out Sunday in particular.

Another provision of the Trust Deed was that women were only to be admitted as the Company 'think best'. This meant that the club house could be a place of relaxation and fun for the men away from both work and family responsibilities, and a real alternative to the delights of the public house. This is an important point, as even in today's politically correct society, men and women need time to relax separately. A Ladies' Section of the club appeared in the 1911 programme of the Garden Village Horticultural Society show (Houlton).

The shopping centre in Beech Avenue was built in a Georgian Classical Revival style, now with Grade II listing (*List* 1994: 47-48). It was built in 1909 in a 'Wrenaissance style' which Pevsner considered was 'used more effectively' than in the club house (Pevsner 1995: 563). The 'beautiful set of shops' (*Reckitts'* IV.6.1910: 78) contributed 'additional architectural interest' to the village (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 184). Built in an E-shape on three sides of a square looking out onto gardens, on two storeys, it has a colonnade of Tuscan columns. Painted black and white, the façade bears a cartouche with festoon (*List* 1994: 47). An overhanging tiled roof is surmounted by a clock tower. The architects' floor plans, published in an architectural journal, for the shops included a butcher and a grocer and greengrocer, and an ice house (Jones 1993). However, the plans differed from what was built. Six original shops were a baker and confectioner, a grocer, a butcher who also sold fish, a hardware shop, a drapery shop and a post office which was also a pharmacy, stationer and newsagent (Houlton). Flats were



Plate 3: Shopping centre, Hull Garden Village, 2001 (photo: author)

on the upper storey on a balustrated walkway. At each end are gabled pavilions with round arches similar the central gateway (*List* 1994: 47).

Three sets of almshouses were built, also in Tudor style, with black and white half-timbered exteriors, and were laid out in an angular semi-circle for security, with gardens and trees. They were rent-free for retired employees and others from the city of Hull, who received 'a small weekly allowance supplemented from time to time...by the provision of bags of coal' (Reckitt, B. 1965: 13).

Frederic I. Reckitt, brother of Sir James, donated almshouses, in a 'three-quarter quadrangle' (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 184). Built in 1912, in memory of his wife and now known as the Frederick Reckitt Havens (*List* 1994: 241) the building is Grade II listed, meaning it is a building 'of special interest which warrant[s] every effort being made to preserve' it (*List* 1994).

Juliet Reckitt donated a block of eight almshouses for 'old servants' of the factories or village residents (*Reckitts'* IV.6.1910: 78). Accommodation consisted of a 'combined sitting-room and bed room, the two divided by a beam from which is hung a curtain' (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 184). Construction is sham timber framing and rendered nogging with a plain tile roof, or mock Tudor, also Grade II listed (*List* 1994: 242).

In 1924 Sir James donated funds for almshouses, the Sir James Reckitt Havens, in the year of his death at the age of 90 (Chapman-Huston 1927: 79). This building is not listed and is in a mock Tudor style in a semi-circle looking over gardens and trees.

Thus the three brothers, James, Frederick and George each have a memorial, although that for George is through his son, Albert's club house (Chapman-Huston 1927: 239).

A number of playing fields and sporting facilities were available in the

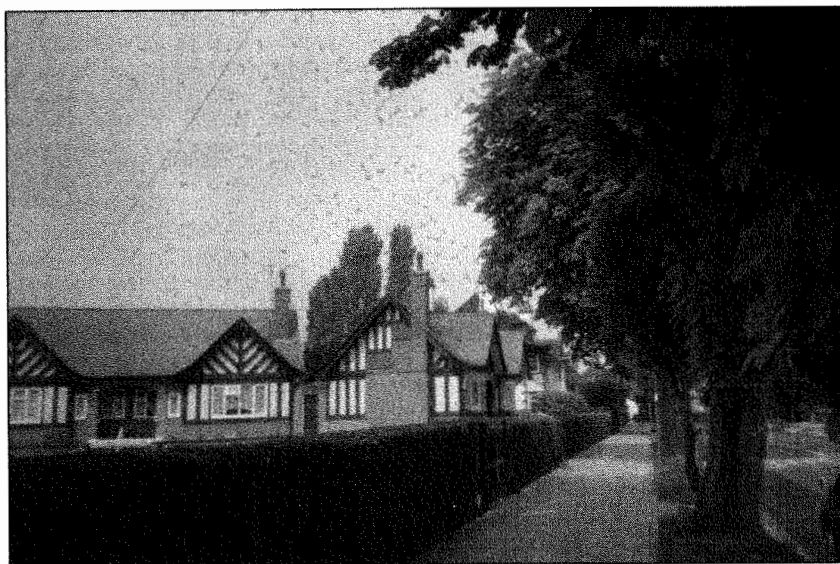


Plate 4: Almshouses, Hull Garden Village, 2001 (photo: author)

Village. Tennis, croquet and bowls could be played on The Oval for a 'nominal charge' (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 184).

A Girls' Hostel was built in 1911 (Chapman-Huston 1927: 312). This rather striking building is situated on the edge of the village and is now used by the local authority. Set at an angle to the road, it is tall and narrow. Rendered and painted white, with a distinctive sharp roof, it complements the Tudor style shopping centre and almshouses. The girls' accommodation, run by a matron, consisted of twenty four single bedrooms with washbasins. There were bathrooms, a dining room and common room. Girls lived there at less than cost (Chapman-Huston 1927: 312). As with Reckitt's experimental housing (*Homes* 1884: 52), it is possible that this hostel was modelled on Reckitt's experience as an Alderman on East Riding County Council's Technical Instruction Committee. In 1899 a residential school to train girls of 13 to 15 as domestic servants was set up in Beverley, run by a matron (*E. Riding Mins* 1889-1900: 364). In turn, this was based on an experimental school in Driffield, a few miles away (*E. Riding Mins* 1896-97: 5).

It may be appropriate here to point out Basil Reckitt's statement in his history of the business, by a list of some of the many philanthropic gifts made by the family, in Hull and elsewhere, 'the...list...is set down in no spirit of vainglory...Names of donors, except where they occur in the title, and actual amounts have been purposely left out' (Reckitt, B. 1965: 92).

HOUSING TYPES

The Garden Village Company (Hull) Ltd planned to build five types of house, set out in detail in an article in the works magazine (*Reckitts'* I.8.1907: 87-89). The largest houses of 'superior class' were to be semi-detached, built around The Oval, a two acre green in the centre of the village.

An abbreviated example follows:

Type 1: Block No. 1, with rates of approximately £6.15.0. per annum in addition to the rental of £19.0.0. An entrance verandah, hall and staircase, front sitting room 16' x 13'; back sitting-room 12' x 12' and recess 7' x 3'6"; kitchen with sink 15'6" x 13'; pantry, coals store, copper (for boiling laundry over a fire), WC, covered way, yard and tools store. Upstairs three good sized bedrooms, bathroom with lavatory and basin, separate WC and box room. This house plot was 475 square yards (*Reckitts'* I.8.1907: 87).

One important point made by Sir James at the ceremony of laying the first brick, was that in all cases the tenants were to pay their own rates, 'with a view to making them feel the full responsibilities of citizenship' (*Hull News* 2.11.1907). As Alderman on East Riding County Council on the Finance Committee (*E. Riding Mins* 1896-97: 19), Reckitt was jointly responsible for

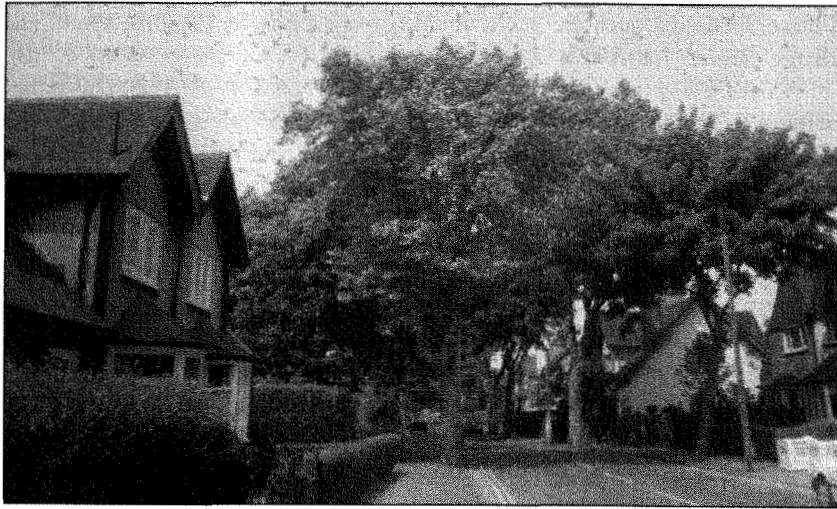


Plate 5: Pleasant, tree-lined avenue, Hull Garden Village, 2001 (photo: author)

setting the Council rates, balancing such good causes as vocational education, the judiciary system and food inspection with the public desire to pay minimal rates (E. Riding *Mins* 1896-97: 142). However, only the tenants with quarterly tenancies paid rates separately to Hull Corporation. Houses with monthly tenancies had rates included in the rent. The architect, P.T. Runton was the agent on the rent book and rent was paid weekly (Houlton).

The second type of house was planned to be rented at £15 to £18 per annum and had one sitting room and three bedrooms. Thirdly, houses at 7/- per week inclusive of rates with one sitting room, kitchen with bath and three or four bedrooms; others at 6/6 weekly. Each pair of houses would have about 500 yards of land (*Reckitts'* I.8.1907: 87).

Fourthly, a 'superior workman's house' for 5/6 and 6/- per week with living room and three bedrooms. Fifthly, a smaller type at 4/6 and 5/- inclusive of rates. However, all would have baths and indoor flushing toilets (*Reckitts'* I.8.1907: 87).

By 1913, out of the planned 600 houses, 465 were occupied and 46 were being built (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 184).

Certain features are noticeable in the houses, whose design varies considerably, adding to the charm of the village; for instance, very steep 'catslide' roofs, some with box dormers (*List* 1994: 394). Some roofs are asymmetric – higher at the back, while the tiles at the front sweep down to just above the ground floor windows. Decorative buttresses or brickwork enclose some porches which may be deep set into the front elevation and open, on the house corner, or with a corner pillar.

Upstairs balconies at the front or side are present on some houses, including the house on The Oval on which Reckitt and others stood for the opening ceremony in 1908. A foundation stone on the neighbouring house records the

laying of the first brick in 1907. Houses are of brick but some are rendered and colourwashed, with decorative tiles set into the front gable. Others have tile-hung gables. There are plenty of windows, some with canted hipped bays. Several small windows may illuminate the staircase. Deep eaves with curved metal gutter brackets appear in some of the Grade II listed houses on The Oval (*List* 1994: 397) and Village Road (*List* 1994: 416).

MOTIVATION

Sir James Reckitt was the driving force and the main source of finance behind the building of Hull Garden Village. An obituary described him thus, 'although one of the most generous of givers, he condemned indiscriminate almsgiving' (*Hull News* 22.3.1924: 4).

James Reckitt's biographer believed that Reckitt was essentially seeking to set himself free and through education he sought to set others free. He wrote that Reckitt was:

a philanthropist by training as well as instinct...he concentrated on making his business a great success, he did so chiefly in order to set himself free...to accomplish the things that lay nearest his heart (Chapman-Huston 1927: 228-9).

and:

No sincere Quaker could be anything but a practical philanthropist...today...people spend a lot of time telling other people what to do. This was never the Quaker way...[they had] the fundamental doctrine of the Indwelling Light...they have always been intensely devoted to the cause of education, believing that if a man know the truth, the truth shall set him free (Chapman-Huston 1927: 228-29).

As County Alderman on the Technical Instruction Committee Reckitt saw the worthwhile results of the award of scholarships (E. Riding *Mins* 1899-1900: 193), travelling dairy schools (E. Riding *Mins* 1896-97: 4) and carpentry classes (E. Riding *Mins* 1899-1900: 54), all raising skills and the ability to earn a living in those who lived in rural locations and market towns.

Reckitt's older sister, Elizabeth, wrote to him from her job as companion governess with their relations, the Ransomes, in Ipswich, 'Farewell dear boy seek above everything else to remember continually that this world is but a preparation for another, an eternal one' (Chapman-Huston 1927: 94).

Sir James Reckitt was a man in his seventies at the inception of the Village in 1907, and when he died at 90, in 1924, he had lived to see it largely completed and occupied by his workforce and others. Most elderly men would have

been content to enjoy a comfortable and wealthy retirement, but instead Sir James chose to undertake an enormous and complicated project. The question remains, that if he was just one of many men who knew a great deal about the poor social conditions of the masses, why had so few others built model housing for working class families?

Reckitt's own health was poor from time to time, and he had also lived in difficult conditions. He used to tell his sons about his time at Ackworth, a Quaker School, when he was young, and how, 'boys were given pails of boiling water and darning needles and told off to kill the lice infesting the wooden bedsteads' (Chapman-Huston 1927: 89).

This experience would have given him some insight into life for the poor. In 1899, over 50 years later, an Alderman on East Riding County Council, based in Beverley near Hull, he sat on the Sanitary and Allotments Committee whose duties included reviewing the Annual Reports of Medical Officers of Health for the Urban and Rural Districts in the county (E. Riding *Mins* 1899-1900: 286).

Alcohol was also an issue for Reckitt. At the ceremony of laying the first brick, he stated that although he was not 'a bigotted teetotaler,' he would prefer households to reduce expenditure on drink from 7/- to 3/- per week, using the saving for rent and home comforts (*Hull News* 2.7.1907). In this respect, he was showing moderation, as there was a flourishing temperance movement in Hull at the time, advocating total abstinence from alcohol, in which his close colleague, T. R. Ferens, took an active part. In 1906 Ferens had organised a school essay competition on alcohol misuse and written the introduction to a book of these, published by the United Kingdom Alliance, a temperance body active in Hull, run by Bertram Fox and supported by many MPs (Fox 1906). Furthermore, Rev. A. B. G. Lillingston who officiated at the opening of the village, was due to speak on Temperance soon after the ceremony of laying the first brick (*Hull News* 9.11.1907: 5).

A sale advertisement illustrates the long-term commercial advantage for a publican's business in the densely populated parts of Hull, "The Full Moon" public house, an old Licensed Beerhouse, No. 23, Spencer-street...[which] occupies an excellent position in a thickly populated locality' (*Hull News* 27.10.1900: 2).

Much housing was rented in the early twentieth century. Houses were advertised for sale in newspapers, which were read mainly by the educated classes, who could afford to purchase them. Considerable wealth was required to purchase houses, as the following examples show:

Charles-street (near). Four houses: price £375: gross rents £32. J. Dant, Estate Agent, 45 Chariot-street.

For sale, 33, May-street, Beverley-road: seven rooms, bathroom and w.c., garden, back-way...

For sale, two tenements, Sykes-street: well-let: cheap: price £90...

For sale. Six good front houses, off Anlaby-road, let at £15 each; mortgage £1,000...

To let House in Tyne-street...six good rooms and bathroom, w.c., and back entrance... (*Hull News*, 27.10.1900: 1-2).

The above extracts are typical. It was a simple fact of life that houses owned by wealthier people would be rented out to those on incomes of shillings per week. Electric tram drivers' wages in 1902 were 28s to 35s for a 60 hour week (*Hull Tramways Cttee* 1902-1903: 35).

Features available in these middle-class houses were important and were therefore stated explicitly, namely bathroom, WC and back entrance. These features, today taken for granted, were to be included in the working class housing to be built in Garden Village. They were not available to the working classes, living in close proximity to their privies elsewhere in Hull.

With regard to returns available for investment in property, light is shed on this, 'Seven per cent interest...London and Provincial House Property Investment Co. Ltd.,...London...Deposits of £10 and upwards are safely invested in Freehold Property' (*Hull News* 20.10.1900: 1).

This rate of interest, seven per cent, was available because relatively high rental income was being obtained. The amount of interest which Reckitt earned from his experimental housing in the 1860-70s was four to five per cent (*Homes* 1884: 52), and the amount envisaged from Garden Village was three per cent (*Reckitts'* 1.8.1907: 87). Thus, the philanthropist was prepared to accept a lower return than a commercial landlord. However, was philanthropy merely a salve for social unrest?

Motivation for building the Village was raised by the Mayor at the opening ceremony, 'He did not think it was necessary for Sir James to assure them that he was not actuated by any ulterior motive...his object in establishing the Garden Village was purely and simply to benefit the people' (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3).

Sir James replied that, 'he was entirely unworthy of all the praise and had only done his duty.' (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3)

This exchange suggests that controversy had indeed taken place over the motivation behind the building of the village. The report of the opening in Reckitt's Magazine put a slightly different slant on the event. Sir James had, 'laid particular emphasis on the fact that the only motive prompting his fellow promoters and himself was that of providing good houses under healthier conditions' (*Reckitts'* II.3.1908: 1).

At the opening ceremony, Thomas Ferens quoted George Cadbury speaking of Bourneville, 'one of the greatest advantages of garden villages was the wonderful development, physical and moral of the children.' (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3).

Thomas Ferens said that he was, 'delighted that the young people who would grow up there would not be the attenuated little creatures that they found in the slums of the large cities' (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3).

Warm applause followed Mr Ferens's declaration that he was offering 'ten guineas a year for three prizes for the best gardens' (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3). The men were stating what they saw as the obvious advantages to be gained from

the provision of good housing and gardens, and by implication, away from the temptations of the public house.

The Mayor, Alderman H. Feldman, JP, said that, 'unless better homes were provided for the people of this country we were calculated to recede from our position among the great nations of the world' (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3).

He added that, 'He hoped the example which had been set by Sir James and his colleagues would be emulated by other benefactors' (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3). From this statement it could be surmised that part of the motivation for building the village was to provide a good example to national government to carry out a national house building programme of high calibre and this was reinforced by photographs and press articles. Philanthropists would be limited by their funds in the projects they could carry out. However, national government was in a position to raise taxes to carry out a house building programme. A political problem would arise if the wealthy were not in agreement when asked to pay more tax to enable housing to be built for the working classes.

Dangerfield suggests that the gold fields opening up in South Africa from 1890 flooded world markets with gold and effectively raised prices on food and clothing, which affected the poor the most. By 1910 the pound had dropped in value to 16s 11d (Dangerfield 1997: 18). Indirect taxes paid by the poor on tea, sugar and coal had risen (Addison 1992: 17). Dangerfield comments, 'The British industrialist was definitely afraid...American Trusts and German Kartellen...were dumping their products in non-protected countries...' (Dangerfield 1997: 182).

Winston Churchill, a Liberal MP from 1906 in the landslide victory (Addison 1992: 50), 'put the case for social reform as the key to social stability' in 1908 (Addison 1992: 63). Writing to Liberal journalist, J. A. Spender, editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, Churchill said:

This revolution is irresistible...however willing the working classes may be to remain in passive opposition merely to the existing social system, they will not continue to bear...the awful uncertainties of their lives (Addison 1992: 59).

Could this have influenced Reckitt, familiar as he was with international business and Liberal politics? Lloyd George, a fellow Liberal and Chancellor of the Exchequer from April 1908, said:

the Labour party would sweep Liberalism away unless the Liberals dealt with the social condition of the people and the presence of widespread poverty "in a land glittering with wealth"...He attributed the existence of poverty to "drink and the vicious land system" (Addison 1992: 57).

Reckitt at the opening ceremony in 1908 stated:

Unless the people who have wealth and influence make proper use of their property and influence the time will come when it may be swept away as it was by the French revolution...we have enemies at home and the way to deal with them is to provide better housing accommodation, more fresh air and more comfort and opportunities for enjoyment and happiness for people (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3).

Ashworth considers, somewhat contentiously, that:

it was not entirely an altruistic project and it is interesting to note that Sir James Reckitt, in his oddly contradictory speech at the opening ceremony, revived the argument of social reform not just for its own sake but as a preservative of the existing order (Ashworth 1968: 140).

Ashworth's observation criticises Reckitt's motivation in building the village, implying that Reckitt intended to keep the working classes in a subservient position. The author would suggest that the criticism is unfair in the light of the social climate of the time and the high quality of the village facilities.

Another more general criticism of nonconformist philanthropy in Hull is that, 'Philanthropy did improve living conditions and housing but it was built on farmland. It didn't remove the slums' (Evans 1996: 39).

Hull Garden Village was built on open land but for practical reasons – there was no large enough plot of land available elsewhere within a reasonable distance of the factories. To obtain land elsewhere in Hull one would be faced with the problems of demolition, relocation of displaced persons and rebuilding. This had been a long-standing difficulty.

The results of the French Revolution are still under discussion. McPhee points out the view of some historians on this event, 'those few changes it made to French politics and society were simply not worth the cost' (McPhee 2002: 186).

If that had been Reckitt's view of the Revolution this would have given him further motivation to prevent revolution by carrying out projects designed to help working people to see that they could gain better lives for themselves without wasteful destruction of the established order.

About the time of the ceremony of laying the first brick a lecture took place in Hull at the Friends Meeting House which would seem to make a further contribution to the argument. On the theme of 'Constructive Philanthropy,' Mr P. Alden, MP talked about London:

the great obstacle to social reform was...the well-meaning sentimentalist who...by corrupting and pampering the people [who] must have opportunities for social intercourse without the temptation and unhealthy excitement of the gin palace (*Hull News* 9.11.1907: 11).

This speaker criticises philanthropy as well-meaning but sentimental, trying

to pamper the poor but not really improving their lives. At the lecture, Hull Councillor Farrah expressed dislike for philanthropy, and Councillor Dawson said that it was 'difficult to get Christian people interested in municipal affairs' (*Hull News* 9.11.1907: 11). Reckitt, a Christian, was making a concrete effort to improve the housing of some of Hull's working classes, even though as a philanthropist he might be unpopular in some quarters.

The subtitle of the article reporting the opening ceremony was, 'Interesting Speech on the Duties of Wealth, Mr T. R. Ferens MP welcomes the Tenants' (*Eastern* 2.7.1908: 3). This puts the focus on the central dilemma of philanthropy. Industrialists had personal wealth far exceeding that of their workers. Were industrialists to share their personal wealth and in effect circulate their money throughout society by using it for philanthropic projects, or were they to keep it for their own benefit? Moreover, if they did nothing to improve the living conditions of their workforce, were they risking social revolution on a terrible scale? There is also the consideration of the agenda of the newspaper editor who composed the headline and allowed space for a long, almost verbatim report of the ceremony, with photographs. Such publicity circulated information about Reckitt's activities through the local purchasers of the newspaper who would have been relatively well off and educated. If such voters could be convinced of the efficacy of improving workers' housing, pressure could be brought to bear on government through the ballot box.

Ashworth also quotes from another source of Reckitt's words:

The only object in view is the betterment of our neighbours, and to enable them to derive advantage from having fresh air, a better house, and better surroundings. I...urge people of wealth and influence to make proper use of their property, to avert possibly a disastrous uprising (Ashworth 1968: 140-1: *Garden Cities and Town Planning*, New Series, vol. III (1908), p. 97).

Firm evidence of a British revolution following that of the French is sparse, but a man in Reckitt's position would not have wished to make unfounded public statements and he must therefore have believed in his assertion.

In other countries revolution was a possibility at the beginning of the twentieth century, 'the rulers of most western countries were perhaps worried about the future' (Hobsbawm 1987: 277).

Hobsbawm quotes Lenin in 1905, 'You are not alone, workers and peasants of Russia! If you succeed in overthrowing...the tyrants...your victory will serve as a signal for a world struggle against the tyranny of capital' (1987: 276).

Reckitt may not have been familiar with such rhetoric, but his biographer hints that his family background may have been a factor in his thinking about England following the path of the French revolution. James's father, Isaac, was born in 1792 about the time when the French monarchy was abolished, nobility were put to death and rule was seized by civilians. Major Desmond

Chapman-Huston, biographer of a general in the First World War, may have been interested in the anti-war stance of Quakers. He points out that:

during this period England, detesting the French Revolution and its child Napoleon, had been fighting at sea for its very life and, when Waterloo put an end to the struggle in 1815, Isaac [Reckitt, father of Sir James] was twenty-three years old (Chapman-Huston 1927: 52).

He suggested that the death of Nelson in 1805 after war with France and Spain,

had made a tremendous impression on the people of England and, condemning war, neither the Quakers nor Isaac Reckitt could have remained unmoved by such tremendous events (Chapman-Huston 1927: 51).

The Reckitt family was of French Huguenot (protestant) origin and this was confirmed when James Reckitt was created a Baronet and given a coat of arms in 1894 (Chapman-Huston 1927: 28). Having come from French stock in the seventeenth century, James Reckitt may have looked to France's history more than most Englishmen.

The following stanza has been selected as a distillation of the sentiments expressed at the time by some socialist thinkers. It does not appear to be by a Hull man, and was published in the *Independent Labour Party Annual 1895*, reprinted from William Morris's socialist publication, *The Commonweal* in 1888. The *Annual* contains other poetry in similar vein.

Let the Revolution come as soon as it may,
It will not come unless it is wanted.
For ours is a society of slaves and slave-owners,
whatever is said to the contrary.
The rich who produce nothing and possess everything,
but cannot enjoy it,
The poor who produce everything and possess nothing,
and are miserable of necessity (Beckett 1895: 131-3).

The introduction to the *Annual* stated that trade union membership was 1.5 million by 1897, and that some believed that they 'held the key to effective political action by the working class' [Marquand, 1971]. If this statement is accepted it is possible to assert that a real fear of revolution may have existed among some of the intelligentsia. Could this have been a contributing factor to the building of Garden Village?

Two Independent Labour Party activists were listed in East Hull (*Annual* 1895: 53, 198) available to hand out possibly inflammatory leaflets and hold

lectures. They were not alone. Considering their close proximity to the large population of people living in poor housing in Hull, the question arises as to whether some educated people felt that 'the writing was on the wall.'

These speculations are not to decry the real feelings of affection that were held by the Reckitt family for the workforce under their care, a view that is supported by correspondence from residents of the Village.

Hull was experiencing industrial unrest in the early twentieth century. In 1900 Mr Ben Tillet, a well-known trade unionist, 'addressed a well-attended meeting of the dockers outside the Alexandra Dock-gates,' urging them to join his union. He referred to the large sum, at that time, of £3,000 being expended by the union on strikes in the previous six months. He told the crowd that engineers had gained advantages through joining unions, and that oil mill workers were now looking for the same advantages (*Hull News* 20.10.1900: 5). Hull was one of the most important ports in the country, trading with Russia, the Baltic and Europe. Hull's most important industries included oil milling and associated industries such as paint manufacture. Industrial turmoil was to be avoided if possible, to keep trade and profits rolling.

At the same time as unrest was being stirred up among potential union members, bodies opposed to unions were also stirring up passions. The Hull Branch of the National Free Labour Association claimed 100 people at a meeting, where the annual report claimed a national membership of almost 4,000. The Association provided non-union labour to work during strikes and thus contributed directly to industrial unrest. Their resolution:

heartily rejoices at the rapid progress which the principles of free labour are making in all parts of the country...[and we resolve to secure] protection from the tyranny of trades union pickets at times of industrial strife (*Hull News* 15.9.1900: 4).

In this climate of social unrest, Reckitt stood. As a religious man, an Alderman, JP and industrialist, he had experience of the beneficial results of educating the working classes in vocational subjects such as agriculture and housemaid's training. His experimental housing scheme had shown him that the health of occupiers was better than elsewhere. He had seen reports of Medical Officers of Health countywide. He and his family had been making financial contributions to projects for many years. What could be better than building his own village to put all these strands into practice, using the experience of others in the field, including his fellow Quakers.

The Bishop of Wakefield spoke at the Convocation of York in 1911:

I would still further like to mention another model, the Village in Hull, which, I think, for its conditions, size, liberality, and appearance, is the best of its kind I have yet seen established under north-country conditions (Chapman-Huston 1927: 242).

The *Builder* commented that, 'after four years, the results have been most satisfactory' (*Builder* 7.12.1913: 184). Since then some of the buildings in the village have been awarded Grade II listing, indicating their national importance (*List* 1994).

CONCLUSION

The question arises as to whether Hull Garden Village is a success. In terms of provision of housing of a good standard for factory employees, the answer should be in the affirmative. The proximity of the Village to the factories, its provision of social and sporting facilities as well as opportunities for gardening and religious services, were all points in its favour. The social mix afforded by it not being solely for factory employees was also positive. Employees who wished to live elsewhere were free to do so. The housing was built to a better standard than most other working class housing in Hull. Sir James Reckitt used his personal experience and that gained in public life in areas of health and education to make the village sporting and education facilities as attractive as possible and discourage alcohol consumption by replacing it with gardening and recreation.

In national terms Hull Garden Village as a part of the garden cities movement contributed to the discussion of housing for the working classes.

The legacy of one family of Quakers in the City of Kingston upon Hull includes a pleasant area of housing which is still sought after, almost a century after its inception, and some of which is Grade II listed. The question of motivation for building the Village may be unimportant in the long term. The long term result of building Hull Garden Village is that a pleasant green lung exists within the bustling city and port of Hull, standing as a memorial to its builder.

1 The author wishes to acknowledge the great assistance provided by Mr W. Houlton of the Garden Village Society, Hull Central Local Studies Library, Hull City Archives, Beverley Archives, the People's Museum, Manchester and others.

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| | |
|--------------------|--|
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| [<i>Homes</i>] | <i>Homes of the People Report of the Conference held in the Town Hall, Hull, February 1st, 1884</i> (Hull: Malet Lambert Local History Reprint 67, 1984). [Hull Local Studies Library] |

- [Houlton] Correspondence received from Mr W H Houlton of Garden Village Society, Hull, 2003.
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- [Names] *East Riding of Yorkshire, The Names of the Justices for the said Riding, 1911.* [Archives, Beverley]
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