

## **Cheddar in the Industrial Age - Peter Daniel**

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F. A. Knight in his book, *Heart of Mendip*, published in 1915, describes Cheddar as a “scattered, straggling and most irregularly built village”, which may account for the fact that I have always found it a rather confusing settlement. I am grateful to Peter Daniel for not only making the settlement much clearer, but also for bringing together pieces of work - such as that done by the local U3A group - in a comprehensive study of the industrial history of Cheddar. It is clear that the author has consulted a wide range of basic sources, such as O.S. maps and the tithe award documents, as well as many hitherto unrecorded.

Cheddar is usually remembered for its scenic landscape or its cheese and strawberries. It is rarely considered for its industrial heritage although this is quite varied as well as interesting. The list of industries is impressive and the amount of new information about specific enterprises is fascinating. The production of paper was particularly significant, stimulated by the plentiful supply of clear water, which also provided generous amounts of power to drive machinery of all types. Another, less well known business in the area was the production of lorries and later, sports cars using wood for their superstructures. The transition from ancient processes of making wagons and the foundry products of local blacksmiths to those of modern engineers has still to be researched across the whole of Somerset. The example of Cheddar is not unusual and is replicated, in other towns and villages. What a splendid subject for another SIAS Survey in the future!

This reasonably priced and well produced booklet should become a must for anybody interested in the history of Somerset and the history of those who worked to produce the things which we have taken for granted for so long as well as those which we no longer require. I still look forward to the “paperless office”, envisaged by the pioneers of the current technological revolution. It can no longer harm the paper industry of Cheddar which only just survived into the twentieth century. Most of those that remained were gradually worked out until only quarrying, strawberries and tourism continued into the twenty first. Such a decline makes this publication all the more important as a reminder of the village’s rich industrial heritage.

**Sandy Buchanan**