

The logo features a stylized graphic of four concentric circles on the left. To the right of the graphic, the words "toffee" and "factory" are stacked vertically in a large, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below "factory", the word "NEWCASTLE" is written in a smaller, all-caps, blue, sans-serif font.

toffee factory

NEWCASTLE

A Little History



By Silvie Fisch

The Toffee Factory is a landmark building located at the mouth of the Ouseburn Valley in Newcastle upon Tyne.

As with many other sites and buildings in the Valley, it has a long history of different uses that reflect the changing fortunes and roles of the area itself, and gives insight into the lives of the people who have inhabited the building over the years.

This booklet concentrates on the memories of some of those people at the time when the building was used to manufacture sweets, but also looks at its various other roles and functions, up until the latest chapter in its history: the award winning conversion into space for 21st century creative businesses.

The booklet has been researched and written by Silvie Fisch as part of the Ouseburn Trust's 'Living Archives' project, with generous and invaluable input from Dale Bolland, Mike Greatbatch and Lisa Tolan, and is published by the Toffee Factory.





Early Days: The Cattle Sanatorium

The Toffee Factory occupies the south western corner of Lower Steenberg's Yard, with two sides formed by nine metres retaining walls holding up Ouse Street and the Glasshouse Bridge. The Yard itself is a strip of land between the small Ouseburn river and the retaining wall to Ouse Street, running from Cut Bank to the Quayside Road. From there, a narrow tunnel provided the only access.

In 1870 Newcastle Corporation decided to develop a 'Foreign Cattle Yard and Slaughter Shops' at the north end of the site. This was a response to the increasing importation of live cattle from abroad, particularly from Scandinavia. The Corporation purchased the land in 1872 for £83,000, and agreed a contract with Henry Hudspeth in 1877 to build a 2-storey sanatorium that could hold up to 635 cattle and 3,000 sheep. The building has since been demolished, but the ramp that was used to get the cattle in and out of the Yard is still a prominent feature.

Livestock imported to Newcastle Quayside could now be sent directly to this new facility, to be quarantined for a minimum of

twelve hours and if found free from disease to be then transferred to open pens for sale and subsequent slaughter.

The U-shaped building that is now the Toffee Factory, was built after the completion of Glasshouse Bridge in 1878, but why it was built is not clear. Any animal that was found to be diseased needed to be slaughtered on-site, and it is possible that this building was used for this purpose. However, its capacity seems too large for disposing of what should have been very small numbers of livestock, so a more likely explanation is that it was commissioned to provide greater storage capacity as imports of livestock increased. In fact, the number of imports grew so much that the Corporation developed an overflow facility further east, at St Lawrence, which opened in 1886.



A 1908 photograph of the demolition of the low level Glasshouse Bridge. Behind it the low level pipe-bridge with the high level Glasshouse Bridge.

However, the anticipated growth in imports didn't materialise, partly because trade with Canada ceased abruptly in 1893 following an outbreak of foot and mouth, and also the development of refrigerated transport reduced the need for live imports.

Consequently, in 1899 the Ouseburn buildings stood empty, and Newcastle Corporation needed to find alternative uses. The site and its buildings were advertised for business leases, and from as early as 1900 part of the site appears to have been used as a timber yard and saw-mill business.



After the demolition of the low level Glasshouse Bridge.



R Steenberg and Son



The original sanatorium buildings at the north end of the site were occupied by R Steenberg & Son from about 1903 onwards, and were used for warehousing.

The tunnel entrance from the Quayside provided access in later years to the Steenberg buildings and still displays the Steenberg name in recognition of the longevity of that firm's occupancy.



Olaf Steenberg (pictured here visiting the newly refurbished Toffee Factory in 2012), who still lives in the Tyne Valley, ran the company with his elder brother Richard from the early 1950s onwards.

Olaf's great grandfather, also Richard, moved to Newcastle from Denmark in the 1850s with the Jutland Steamship Company, which mainly imported timber from Scandinavia, and exported grindstones to Denmark. He sold the company to DFDS and started his own, leasing most of what we now know as Lower Steenbergs Yard in 1903 from Newcastle Corporation.

Olaf's father Frank (who was christened in the nearby Sailors Bethel, a nonconformist sailors' chapel and later a Danish church) took over from Richard. The company concentrated on storage and transport.



Frank Steenberg with some of his employees



Lard, widely used as a substitute for butter during World War II, was one of the main items stored in bulk. It was mainly produced by John Lorell and Co, and arrived in large blocks that were split up and delivered to wholesalers and retailers.

WAREHOUSE No. 1.

VERY COOL, SPECIALLY SUITABLE FOR LARD AND PROVISIONS.



ALL WAREHOUSES CEMENTED THROUGHOUT

Summer Temperature generally 10—15° below outside shade temperature.

In the early days canned food and other goods arrived by sea mainly from Scandinavia, and were transported up the Ouseburn from the Quayside berth (Malmo Quay) in wherries. With the help of small cranes and a railway line the goods were then taken to the one storey warehouses.



Later the site had a warrant with the Metal Exchange for the storage of lead in 25 tonne lots, many in lead ingots, for Newcastle Lead Company.

The company also used horses and carts to transport goods from the 1930s onwards, and later this side of the business grew into 'Ouseburn Transport Company', which, at its peak, ran a fleet of 60 lorries. The business developed a lucrative sideline in charabanc holiday and excursion trips, until the advent of bus companies undercut them.



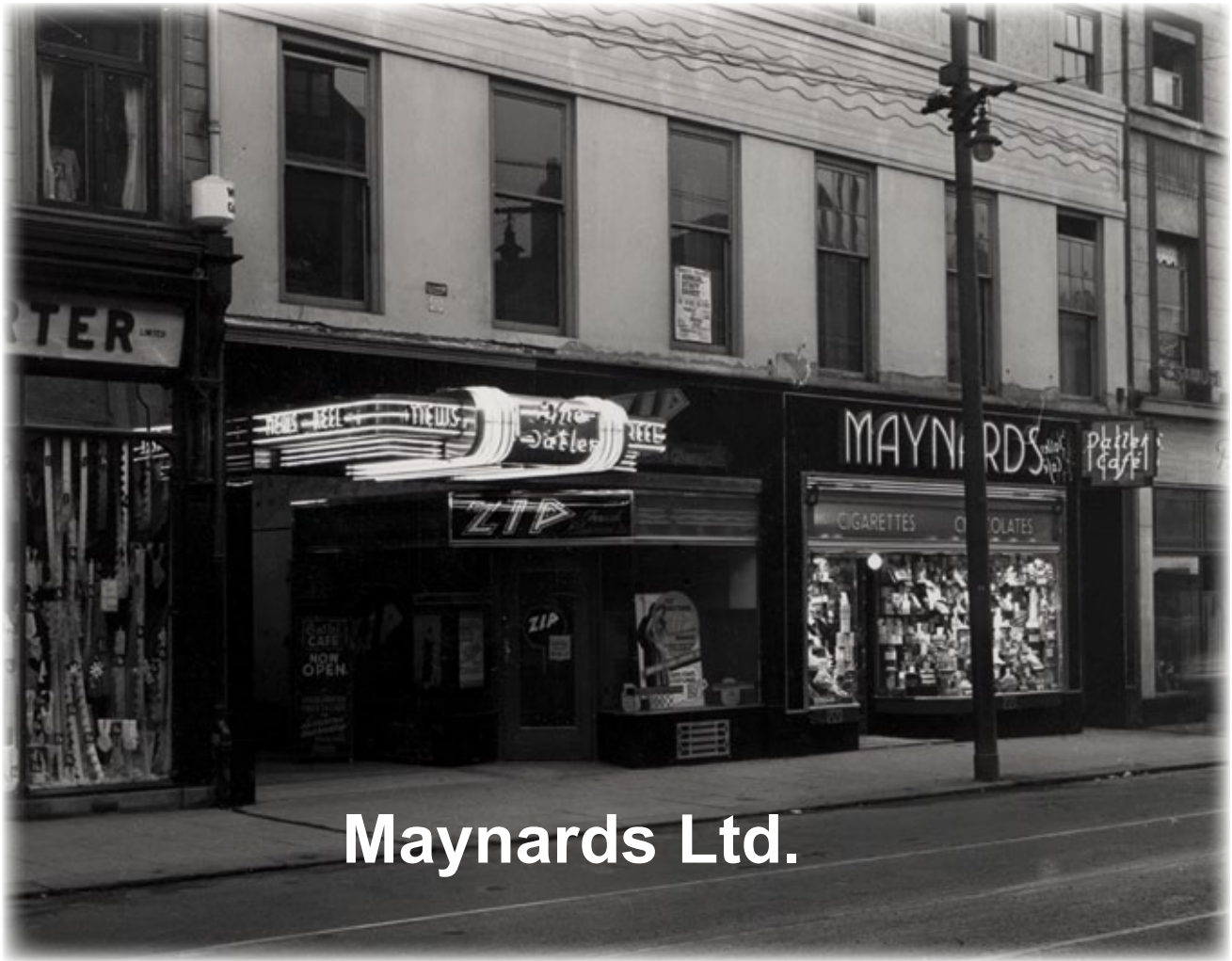
A WWI tin hut on Lower Steenberg's Yard served for many years as the company's office, until they leased land across the river on the corner of Hume Street and Byker Bank, which became the location for their new office.

In the late 1980s the empty Toffee Factory was offered to Steenberg's by the City Council, and although the building was not ideal for their storage uses, the company leased it, mainly to prevent anyone else occupying it and disrupting their operation of the wider yard. It became their 'Warehouse No. 8', and the distinctive blue company colour can still be seen on recent photographs.

But by this time most of the major shipping companies had embraced the 'containerisation revolution' and the concept of intermodalism. The goods for the warehouses now arrived in larger road transport vehicles, but the Council as landlord refused to allow the company to alter the tunnel entrance into

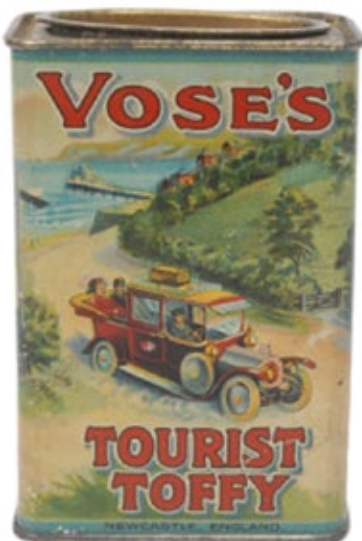
the yard. This made it difficult to operate, and Steenbergs eventually moved out in the early 1990s.

They decided to sell all their Newcastle property, leases and freehold, to Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (TWDC). They wanted the sites for relocation of businesses from their East Quayside development, but in 1998 the Lower Steenbergs Yard site and the Toffee Factory ownership reverted back to Newcastle City Council (NCC) on the winding up of TWDC.



Maynards Ltd.

It all began with John Vose. When he started out in St. Helens as a labourer in the mid 1870s he was without doubt a determined man, but chances are that even in his wildest dreams he wouldn't have expected his name to be connected to a building in Newcastle that would one day become part of a multimillion pound urban regeneration programme.



Still a very young man, he moved to Liverpool, where he worked as a confectioner. When he decided to branch out on his own around 1888 he chose Newcastle, which had advantages such as a port for the sugar. He also knew it through work, and because his contract didn't allow him to start a business close to the area where he was working. The family settled down in New Bridge Street, where they lived above his workshop, and started selling Everton Mints to the shipworkers.

In 1891 he is already recorded in Ouseburn Road, with his two sons working as sugar boilers. His business did phenomenally well, and by the mid 1890s he was running several retail premises in the city, on Westgate Road, Shields Road and Sandhill, ideal locations to sell confectionery.

At the same time two brothers from London, Charles Riley and Tom Maynard, saw their confectionery business flourish. They had started manufacturing sweets in 1880 in their kitchen, while Charles's wife sold their products in a shop next door. In 1896 the brothers formed the Maynards sweet company. The works grew consistently to become a four-figure employer in the Haringay area. As Maynards grew, it expanded its manufacturing operations to other locations, including Newcastle. John Vose's factory and shops are mentioned in a list of prospective new premises from 1896.

Why John Vose sold his successful business to Maynards and moved back to his home town around 1898 remained a mystery to his family. All they know today is that he lived very comfortably of the profits of the sale until he died. His great great granddaughter Mary Hitt from Lancashire says:

“I think he always retained an affection for Newcastle - he named his home in St Helens Tyne Villa! It is actually quite appropriate that the factory is to be a home for creative businesses as he was a real entrepreneur, coming from nothing - uprooting his family in those days could have not been easy.”



Some of John Vose's descendants still live in Byker today. Brian Vose (standing, third from left) regrets: "My father inherited a bit of the money but spent it all."

On 2nd May 1906, Newcastle Corporation approved a request from Maynards Ltd to lease the first-floor warehouses (No.'s 15 & 16) and seventy square yards of ground at the Ouseburn Sanatorium for a period of seven years, from 1st May 1906, at a rent of £50 per annum. Maynards' lease of 1906 was renewed in 1913 for a further ten years, and in 1916 they took a lease on warehouses and other premises in Ouse Street.





Only eight years later Emily Darby was born in Byker, the second youngest of seven children, her dad a sheet metal worker.

She felt lucky when she got her first job at Maynards at the age of 14.

“There was loads of unemployed men standing at the corners of the streets you know. The employment was hard to get for everybody then.” Her first task was to hand wrap the boiled sweets, until the first wrapping machine came in: “I used to feed them

in when the first wrapping machine was there. They made the sweets, boiled them, then they came down to the packing room, you would wrap them and bottle them and send them up to the warehouse. And I used to get a variety of jobs, sometimes you were pushed in the warehouse for orders, or once I was labeling the bottles, I must have had a straight eye for sticking the labels on the bottles of sweets. They had a lot of shops then you know, round the coast, and there were three in Newcastle I think. Actually they were always very busy in the summer but in the winter the orders dropped off because they didn’t have the seaside places.”

In the winter Maynards employed about thirty people in the factory. The confectionery industry had become a major employer for women workers. “There was the boiler room, then the warehouse girls, the packing room, and there was a woman on washing, poor old soul, I used to feel sorry for her, washing bottles all day. She had a great big deep sink she used to wash all those bottles, I remember her. They had a sort of canteen but you had to take your own lunch with you, you know. You could make a cup of tea but nothing like they have today.”

Emily remembers how different working conditions were back then: “You worked from half past seven in the morning, an hour off at dinner time till 5 o’clock at night. And you worked Saturday morning as well, a 48 hour week you had then. My first wage ten shillings and six pence. ‘Course you didn’t get paid for your holidays then either, you got a weeks holiday but you didn’t get paid for it. And I remember, they had a £4 box of chocolates, Maynard’s of course, and they had a raffle and that was the Christmas box for all the staff. I won it two years running and the next year they wouldn’t let me in, I was barred. (...) We had a trip once to Knaresborough but it was the only time I remember them giving us a trip. It must have been too expensive for them ‘cause we never had another one.”

In the years between the wars women were expected to give up work on their marriage. “I worked till I was 24, till I left to get married and in those days you never thought of going back to work, that’s what you got married for, to look after your husband.”



Irene Osborne from Walker who had started working for Maynards at the age of fifteen in 1948 recalls: “I used to go to a dance at the time, I was young you know, and we used to get bags of sweets on a Friday, broken rock and chipped sweets and what not, so I was quite popular, cos the sweets were rationed.”

The process of de-rationing began in the same year, but made slow progress. In 1950 rationing ended for chocolate biscuits, treacle, syrup, jellies and mincemeat. It took another three years before sugar and butter rationing ended.

Irene stayed at the 'Sweet Factory', as it was then called, for four years, and worked in the packing room. "I liked the packing room, it was good, apart from scrubbing the floor on a Friday afternoon, everybody on their hands and knees with soda and the water. And the pay was quite good, about twenty four shilling I think, and we used to get a bonus once a year. So I saved me first five pound note then and I was thrilled with it."

Finding employment at the start of the 'Golden Age' of economic growth wasn't difficult, and as a consequence reliable workers weren't necessarily the norm. "I've seen people come in in the morning and not come back the next day you know, cos there was plenty of jobs out. Nobody got much money but there was still plenty jobs."

The management seemed to have learnt a thing or two since Emily Darby's days, at least they organised dances and regular outings for their workers.



Trip to Filey (Irene in the middle)

“We played games on the sands and everything, and on the Monday everybody could hardly move cos we weren’t used to exercise and the boss he was laughing cos he was a keen rugby lad.”



Irene was a rather shy girl but got on well with her colleagues. “At lunchtimes we used to just all sit and talk you know. There wasn’t time to go home but we had a good time, good talking and kidding everybody about boys, lads... Not that I’d known one at the time... I was very quiet, very quiet, and we used to go to the dances, cos most of them were about the same age you know. All young.”

“But we worked hard, we did, worked hard for our money. They made the sweets upstairs in the boiling room they used to call it, put them on trays to cool, and then we would take them, send them down in the lift, we would lift them off, put them in the racks to dry, to cool, and then we would pack them. Some of them we used to put icing sugar on them cos they would get sticky. And I used to stick labels on sometimes which used to get on me nerves a bit cos they were never very straight.”

Although Maynard's Toffee was the most advertised ("They used to melt in your mouth, especially when they were warm and you would have a chew as you were passing"), the factory produced a range of popular boiled sweets such as Acid Drops, Black Bullets, Brazils, Cloves, Pear Drops, Humbugs, Aniseed Balls, and most noticeably Rock, including Edinburgh Rock.

"We used to do rock from Filey, Scarborough, Blackpool. I sometimes used to go upstairs to the order room and we used to pass the boiling room and they were rolling the rock, it was quite fascinating watching you know. They used to start with a great fat lump and get smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller."

Irene takes us on a little tour: "You'd dip Brazils, but you used to do them in a little room downstairs. It was me and the girl called Jean. The drivers used to pass and take a handful, and we used to go mad cos we would get wrong if we were short, but we used to have a couple ourselves as well. We didn't used to pinch the sweets, but we used to eat all the little bits, the little bits that were lying about. In fact I don't know how everyone wasn't great big and fat."

"There was a little room right at the end, the back. There was a woman sat in there dipping chocolates all day. Mind I don't know where they came from cos I don't think we made them, and she used to have her hand in this big tray of chocolate and just kept going like that all the time, you know. Used to make you feel a bit sick, there was about four girls who worked with her, but I was glad I wasn't in that one."

"And there seemed to be quite an awful lot of stairs in it. You came in the door and you went down a flight of stairs, and then another couple of flights of stairs till you got on our floor. We were right on the bottom, apart from like a cellar part with like all the boxes in, glue and stuff like that. It was a bit spooky if you had to go downstairs and get bags and stuff cos it was all dark, and you could hear little feet running about, sometimes you did see a rat,

we just used to scream for one of the blokes to come and shoot it.”

The size of the workforce had remained very similar since pre-war days: “I think about twelve on the packing floor. About twelve in the boiling room, and then upstairs there was the girl who did all the orders. I think she only worked on her own, and there was about four or five in the office. So there wasn’t really that many. Of course there was the drivers, about half a dozen drivers.”



One of those drivers was George Gordon Thompson. He followed in the footsteps of his grandfather George Gordon Sewell, who started out delivering sweets by horse and cart. He worked as a driver until the late 40s and spent his later years as a nightwatch man.

His grandson remembers: He used to bring his van home at dinner time and while he was having his lunch I would climb in the van and scrape leftovers out of the empties.”

He liked his life as a ‘van lad’, lots of fresh air and getting around all over the North East, where the company had 56 shops, one in most little towns and villages plus extra seasonal shops, three in Whitley bay alone. Deliveries came from the warehouse in London’s Finsbury Park, Maynards’ headquarters and also the main factory that produced their wine gums. Allegedly around the turn of the last century, Charles Gordon Maynard, heir to the candy firm, suggested to his father Charles senior, to diversify into making ‘wine gums’, an idea that outraged the strict Methodist. Charles Riley gradually came round to the idea when his son persuaded him that the projected new sweets would not contain alcohol, and they were introduced in 1909.



Maynards shop on the corner of Grey Street and High Bridge

The third warehouse was based in York. “I remember York, we went there on a Friday during the summer. Newcastle made the rock for the coast areas and we took it down early on Friday morning, so that we could get down there, get emptied and get back by half past 5 at night.”

George Gordon’s working life changed substantially when he became a ‘warehouse lad’. He received all deliveries for the factory, such as 2 CWT (224 pounds) bags of sugar, butter, nuts and glucose drums, and made sure the finished sweets left the premises safely. Within the factory the warehouse men supplied the workers with the ingredients they needed: “We asked the sugar boilers when they came in what they wanted, either granulated sugar or the brown sugar, the butter, the colouring they wanted, then we used to go down into the garage, looked about and transported up in the lift the 200 pound bags, 200 pounds of sugar, it came in on a flat wagon and you had to hand load it off on your shoulder and stack it 10 ft high. The warehouse was very tough.”

The golden days ended for Newcastle in the late 1950s when the factory ceased production. The retail shops were sold off in 1985.

In 1990 Maynards merged with the Tottenham liquorice mill Barratt's and candy firm Trebor. In 1998, following the acquisition of the company by Cadbury, the London factory closed and Maynards sweet manufacture was continued in Sheffield.

Sadly, in 2010 the British chocolate industry lost its last major asset in the process of globalisation and under the pressure of shareholder capitalism. The Cadbury takeover by Kraft was one of the largest business deals in British history. The country lost yet another company that had been integral to its culture for almost two hundred years, and had been led to success by business leaders who believed that wealth creation was for the benefit of the workers, the local community and society at large.





Years of Defeat

In 1993 the former Newcastle factory was severely damaged by fire. The fight to retain it as part of the original fabric of the Ouseburn was one of the prompts for the formation of the Ouseburn Trust. The shell of the building stood derelict without a roof until it was transformed into The Toffee Factory in late 2011.

Several unsuccessful attempts were made by the Council to develop the site:

- It was proposed to demolish the Toffee Factory (TF) building and prop up the Ouse Street retaining wall (being held up by the TF) by a large bund of earth covering most of the site.
- The site was offered to the Ouseburn Trust, but there were too many liabilities and risks for the newly formed organisation.
- In 1994 proposals emerged to refurbish the building, by Entrust (for their new HQ) and by R & J Ince to create rentable space.

- In 2001 the whole of Lower Steenbergs site inc TF building was marketed with 3 other Ouseburn 'spine sites' (Spillers Quay, Upper Steenbergs and the site west of the Free Trade Inn). Ouseburn Development Partnership consortium (lead partners Miller Homes NE and Bellway Homes) were chosen to carry out a phased development but after 5 years of protracted negotiation the agreement was abandoned without a brick being laid.
- In 2006 Lower Steenbergs site including TF was marketed by itself. A shortlist of two was eventually chosen in 2007, but the final selection got delayed by unresolved sewer issues and was eventually overtaken by the events below.





Toffee Factory Refurbishment

Real hope was finally on the horizon in 2010, with the formation of 1NG by Newcastle City Council, Gateshead Council and ONE, the government's regional development agency for the North East.

East Quayside and Ouseburn Estuary (EQOE) were chosen as one of 1NG's areas of activity. Funding was made available by ONE for major projects in this area as early wins for 1NG, while longer term projects such as Science Central and Gateshead Quays were progressed.

Previous NCC Ouseburn Regeneration Manager Peter McIntyre became 1NG Director of Planning and Programme Management, and EQOE project lead. Speedy progress was made:

- Acquisition of 3 privately owned sites in the Ouseburn by ONE, and the formation of a joint venture agreement between NCC and ONE (since transferred the Homes and Communities Agency on winding up of ONE);

- Selection of a private development partner (announced in late 2012 as Carillion Igloo) to develop 5 joint venture sites around the Toffee Factory;
- Infrastructure, public realm works and environmental improvements – riverside walkway completion, and high quality hard landscaping around the Tyne pub and Toffee Factory.

Local Ouseburn architects, xsite architecture, designed the conversion of the Toffee Factory shell into high quality move-on office space for creative sector businesses.

Creative Space Management, a private company who specialise in managing this type of space, were appointed by the Council to market and run the facility.





Since day one the Toffee Factory has been gaining recognition. In 2012 alone it won two Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Awards - **Project of the Year** and **Regeneration**. It then won three Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) North East Awards - The “**RIBA Award**” - meant it went onto the longlist for the Stirling Prize - **Building of the Year Award** and **Sustainable Building of the Year Award**.

RIBA judges said: “The derelict toffee factory, with trees growing out of its ruined shell, has been reincarnated as a managed work space for the creative industries. (...) It has become a landmark in the regeneration of the Ouseburn Valley and a significant addition to Newcastle’s architectural legacy.”

The Toffee Factory is now home to over twenty digital and creative businesses, from Advertising, Design, Graphics, Marketing and PR agencies through to Architects and Landscape Architects.

It is a hive of activity and a real asset to the Ouseburn.



A huge 'thank you' to...

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