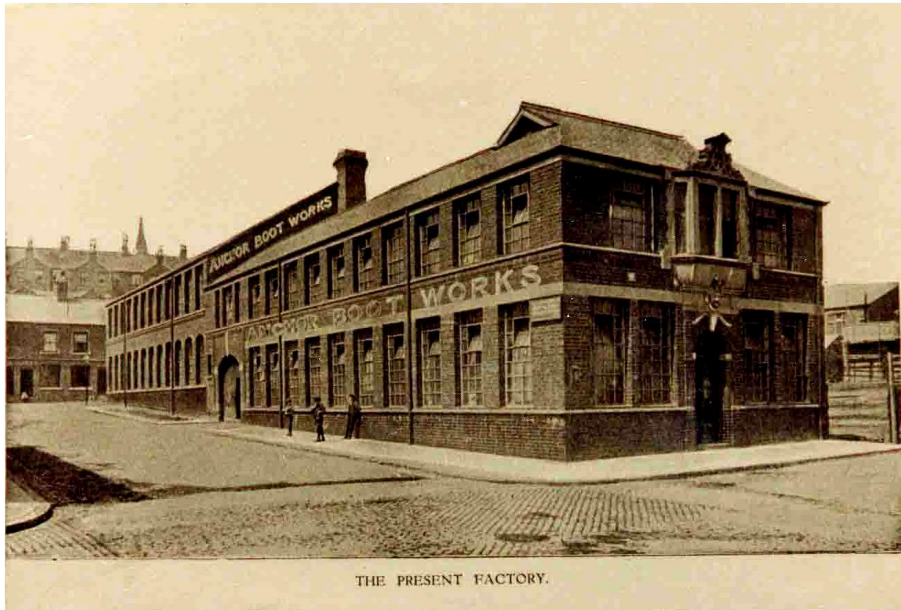


The logo for Anchor Tenants Limited is a circular emblem. At the top, the text "Anchor Tenants Limited" is written in a curved path. At the bottom, the motto "Not greater wealth, but simpler pleasures" is written in a curved path. The central part of the emblem features a stylized anchor on the left and a vertical staff with a crossbar on the right. In the background, there are several simple line drawings of houses with gabled roofs and windows.

Anchor Tenants Limited

A brief history

Compiled by Ian Pawson



The Anchor Boot and Shoe Company was an offshoot of the Equity Boot and Shoe Co-operative Production Company, Western Road, Leicester. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were a large number of such societies in Leicester, many of which were in the boot and shoe manufacturing trade. A brief history of this Leicestershire industry explains why this was so.

The Leicester Equity Boot and Shoe Manufacturing

Society Limited was formed in 1887. A pioneer co-partnership society, modelled on the lines of the Christian Socialist workshops (Christian Socialists were still a great power and influence on co-operative thought at this time), its formation was an event of considerable importance in the history of co-partnership in industry, not only in Leicester but throughout the co-operative movement. Many of the men involved were originally employed by the Co-operative Wheatsheaf Works in Leicester (1862) where the Directors did not favour the views of Vansittart Neal and other Christian Socialists who advocated co-partnership in industry as a means of progress.

Disgruntled employees broke away to form an alternative system of not just being wage earners to that of democratic management, giving the workers a say in the running and also a controlling interest. The Equity Boot and Shoe society proved successful and moved to a spacious factory in Western Road, Leicester, which they were able to buy outright in 1894.



The builders - November 1908

Road and Seven Bridges Lane and (later on 23rd December 1903) an estate in South Knighton. Enquiries were also made about land in the neighbourhood of Scraftoft; on 28th January 1904 they interviewed Woodhouse & Salisbury. According to Amos Mann, the 'promoters of this scheme would have liked to have kept within the Borough boundaries of Leicester, but the price of land was

According to the Anchor Tenants Society Management Committee Minutes Books (9, 10, 12 of 1903), land was looked at and carefully considered in other parts of Leicester before deciding upon the Humberstone area. An Estates Committee was elected (29th September 1903) of three members including J T Taylor, Secretary. With reference to an estate at South Knighton, plans were submitted by Rolleston & Co (24th September 1903); the Committee interviewed Sir John Rolleston and looked at plots of land - one on the corner of Welford

The Memorial to the memory of George Hern, at the junction of Fern Rise and Laburnum Road, 1911



absolutely prohibitive’, particularly land which could accommodate well built, low density housing with ‘a good stretch of land to each house for gardens, with recreational ground and allotments for all, within easy reach of the householders’.

In January 1906, Miss Sybilla Gurney, Secretary of the Housing Council, visited Leicester and, on 3rd April 1906, Frank Litchfield, the Organising Secretary, entered

into correspondence with the committee over buying land at Humberstone. A Special Meeting was called on 7th April 1906, when the secretary gave a resume of the Society’s past work and objects and moved the following resolution:

‘... seeing that owing to the refusal of the Anchor Boot Society to purchase the land at Humberstone, the objects of the Society would have to be somewhat different to that held out as an inducement to members to join. Anyone wishing to withdraw from the Society may do so on giving seven days notice to the Secretary from April 27th 1906’.



The plaque on the first pair of cottages, 1908

At this time, however, Anchor Tenants decided to join the Housing Council (annual subscription 5/-), which was Vivian's advisory and propaganda body established to give help and guidance to tenant associations. The Council outlined various propaganda schemes, arranged lantern lectures in connection with the educational work of the Anchor Boot and Shoe society, helped to make printing arrangements for a Prospectus publicising the objects of the Society and proposed publishing an article on Anchor Tenants in the Pioneer under the heading of 'The Housing Question'. Once again, the Anchor committee agreed to broaden membership and also

to increase loan stock interest from 4% to 5%. These events seem to have turned the tide; talking to Vivian produced the advice that negotiations to buy the land should be put in the hands of Litchfield; Sybella Gurney promised to invest £100 in the Society's Loan Stock to help them raise money for land purchase (Minutes of meetings 8th November 1906 and 5th December 1906).

Early in 1907, negotiations with Captain Hartopp for the land at Humberstone were re-opened. The initial problems (lack of sustained interest and of regular subscriptions from the workers) and Sybella



The 'moni' in the 1960's



Gurney's 'injection of faith' in the society were later acknowledged in the Special Demonstration Supplement (No. 10a) of The Forerunner of July 1911, 'The year 1906 ended with capital still further reduced to £277. However, 1907 must ever be looked to as the turning point in the history of the Society. Two things helped towards it's success:

Four years of patient plodding had been a testing time, eliminating the waverers, leaving a smaller band, more determined than ever to persevere and overcome all preliminary difficulties:

The encouragement we received from the Honorary Secretary of the Housing Council, Miss Sybella Gurney.'

By the end of 1907, the Society's capital had increased to £1500 and they entered into a contract to purchase, at £100 per acre, a forty-eight acre estate, situated at Humberstone, from Captain Barns Hartopp. At this time, it was also acknowledged in the Minutes that the Anchor Prospectus had met with warm approval among leading Leicester citizens.

Seventeen acres of land to the east, and in the parish of, Humberstone were purchased outright, with the remainder on mortgage at 3.5% to be redeemed by instalments of ten acres every

three years; with buying consolidated annuities to cover the land tax, conveyancing and the freehold costs clear of all charges, total cost worked out at £116 per acre.

The site was on a north-south slope, with Keyham Lane to the north, at six hundred feet above sea level, and with an uninterrupted view across the countryside to Stoughton village. To the south west, fields extended to North Evington and, on the east, there were no houses between the site and Scraptoft village. The estate was, therefore, situated in a pleasant rural belt, which had natural spring water. Gas mains were in close proximity, but there were no storm drains or sewerage within practical distance.



Lilac Avenue showing the 'posts and three strands of wire' fencing

In October 1907, negotiations were sufficiently advanced to invite Henry Vivian's approval. A 'Demonstration' was organised to take over the land formally; the ceremony was performed by (Birmingham) Councillor J S Nettlefold and presided over by Henry Vivian, supported by Sir Edward Wood (Mayor of Leicester), Councillors Flint, Walker, Burrows, Mann and Taylor, the Revd. A Manwell and Dr C K Millard (Medical Officer of Health). A large

THE LINK

PRECEDED BY THE A. T. FORERUNNER.
The Official Organ of the Humberstone Garden Suburb.

"NOT GREATER WEALTH, BUT SIMPLER PLEASURES."

No. 1.

APRIL, 1912.



The best form of investment for those of small means—who cannot afford to take large risks—is that form of investment which concerns itself with Real Property only—particularly that form known as Tenants' Societies. It eliminates many of the risks of ordinary property owning, by sharing the responsibilities with its Tenants. This system has proved itself a success and offers a fair remuneration to Investors:—

Share Capital 5% Interest, Loan Stock 4%.
Loans for short periods taken at rates of Interest and Terms of Withdrawal agreed upon.

Full particulars - Secretary, ANCHOR TENANTS LTD.

Humberstone and District Supply Association Limited.

We are now in a position to supply your requirements in
DRAPERY AND SMALLWARES, BOOTS AND SHOES.

Ask to see our Stock before going elsewhere.

We have also a stock of

READY-MADE CLOTHING

for Men and Boys, and can supply all your requirements in clothing at reasonable prices.

number of prominent Leicester citizens were also present, to show their interest in the new housing experiment by working men. Vivian and Nettlefold addressed the meeting, both pointing out that there was more to the housing problem than just the building of houses; the present scheme, they said, was to give the poor man the same advantages as the rich one had in regard to living in the country.

Progress was maintained. By September 1910 forty-nine houses had been built and occupied. Keyham Lane was developed first, followed by some houses in Lilac Avenue, two isolated ones at the end of Laburnum Road, near to the farm, with later development in Laburnum Road and Fern Rise. Gardens were spacious and well stocked with fruit trees and bushes, the Garden Committee having decided which were the most suitable trees and shrubs for the type of soil.

More capital was needed. Anchor Tenants affiliated to the Co-partnership Tenants Limited and, with their help, a loan was negotiated with

[Anchor Tenants Limited - A brief history](#)



The 'Tower' House - early 1900's

the Public Works Loan Commission and the Management Committee attempted to open negotiations for mortgages on eight houses. Amos Mann and J T Taylor (President and Secretary respectively) arranged to visit Vivian and Frank Litchfield in London to discuss 'the whole matter of our relation with Federated tenants' (Minutes of 8th March 1910). Later W Hutchings and C Ramsbotham visited Humberstone Garden Suburb 'with a view to rendering financial help'. Litchfield laid down conditions and terms upon which financial help could be granted.

Anchor Tenants then changed their rules 'in accordance with the Model Rules furnished by Co-Partnership Tenants' (Minutes 8th March 1910), which suggests that cash flow was not sufficient under the old system, tenants were not contributing enough share stock and perhaps local stock was not selling well. Further, by reducing Unwin's housing density of ten-twelve houses per acre to seven-eight, they were interfering with the fine economic balance.



In October 1910 the first number of their monthly magazine, The A T Forerunner was published, to keep tenants in touch with each other and with community activities, and to create a spirit of brotherhood and good neighbourliness. Encouragement for the community beliefs and eulogy about their estate appeared in editorials and articles, with news of a proposed Medical Society and a Choral and Debating Society. Tenants were also informed that Co-Partnership Tenants Limited had offered to invest a further £100 for every £100 share capital obtained by Anchor Tenants. Themes of co-operation, self-help, self-reliance, environmental beauty, fresh air, space, benefits of gardens and a general air of optimism, community spirit and progress permeated the magazine. In April 1912 the magazine title was changed to The Link and continued in circulation until 1915, the last edition being half the size of the original due to wartime shortages.



Plaque reads:

*Humberstone
Garden
Suburb. Founded
1907 for Anchor
Tenants Limited,
with grateful thanks
to the pioneers.*



The opening service in connection with the new Meeting House, the Church of Christ, took place on October 28/29 and was reported in the Forerunner in November 1910. The sect provided the moral tone for the whole community. Many 'Anchorites' had worshipped at the Church of Christ (1865) Crafton Street, Leicester. The sect has a long history related

to industry, particularly with the boot and shoe manufacturing trade in Leicester. The Church of Christ originated in America in 1811, through the work of Alexander Campbell. J T Taylor took over the leadership of the church in the early days at Humberstone Garden Suburb; he was a great friend of John Wycliffe Black, a boot and shoe manufacturer of Wigston, who was a powerful member of the church in Leicester, and Leader in 1890 of the Crafton Street branch. Members ran this, with no paid



The cricket team, June 1938

ministers; the sect created its own leaders. Black traces a direct link back to Alexander Campbell, the founder, as his (Black's) grandfather, James Wallis, a strict Scottish Baptist who settled in Nottingham in 1836, was a close friend of Alexander Campbell.

By 1911 a further twenty houses had been built and a total of sixty families housed in semi-detached houses with white rough-cast walls and dark red tiled roofs, and the social life of the community had developed considerably. The second stage of the development received a serious setback when George Hern

First bus to Garden City, 7th March 1938



The first bus service to Garden City

Between 1912 and 1915, building operations proceeded but at a much slower pace and houses became standardised. More shareholders joined the Society as its fame grew. All prospective tenants were required to hold shares in the Society to a value of £50, each share costing £10; after an initial down payment, the shares could be bought by instalments of not less than 10/- per quarter. Interest of 5% and dividend on rent (usually 1/- or 1/6 in the £) would be accruing to the tenant towards his total of £50. After that, he could choose to receive two cash payments a year or to leave them in towards more shares. A maximum of £200 per member was allowed, under the Act; any tenant who acquired shares amounting to £200 lived in his house rent-free. The estate census in 1913 recorded a population of three hundred and fifty-two people.

died on 13th October 1911. He was considered by all to be an admirable man as Manager of the building programme. At this stage of the development, no two houses were alike, as tenants had been allowed to dictate their requirements. A beech tree was planted at the lower end of Fern Rise as a memorial to Hern, a special meeting was called, and a resolution passed that Hern's salary be continued for one month and that his brother, Albert, be approached to give assistance to the secretary. (Minutes of 14th October 1911). In the same Minutes, it is also recorded that Mrs Hern be offered the job of cleaning Room and Office at a fee of 2/6d per week. Mrs Hern continued to live on the estate with her two sons.

Recreational facilities were established; a cricket pitch, a bowling green in 1912 and the tennis courts later in 1914. In 1915, the value of the estate was estimated at £33,000. By that time, the shops shown in Unwin's plan had been built and occupied by a butcher, grocer and haberdasher. Over the shops were a meeting room, offices and a large room for recreational purposes. A farm at the other end of Laburnum Road, supplied dairy food; a local resident kept bees and sold honey; another tenant delivered coal and logs to the door, and most tenants grew their own vegetables.



The Laburnum Road shops

A Medical Society and a Distribution Society were established; social events, including Saturday concerts and lectures, were running smoothly. There was a variety of games clubs, Music and Debating Societies, and a Garden and Horticultural Society to choose from. Everyone's needs were taken care of.

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Tenants also collected together sufficient books to furnish a small lending library. Winter entertainment included dances, parties, whist drives and lectures. Christmas 'At Homes' made sure that every tenant received an invitation, and Christmas festivities included fancy dress parties, choral society functions and a carol evening. In summer, there were open-air concerts, flower shows and festivals, and other Gardening Club activities. Four acres of playgrounds and open spaces provided the children and young people with outdoor amenities, with a further six acres under development. Club membership was open to all tenants, with fees kept as low as possible to retain viability. Profits from the



Humberstone choral society performing in the grounds of the Warren - 1937

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The office in the days when it had a phone box outside

the water supply overhauled; a new Hall for social gatherings was built in 1937 and, in the 1930s, a detached house was built on the site of the bowling green. In 1938-9 houses were built along the southern end of Chestnut Avenue, although land at its northern end was sold to a private builder for £4,500 as, earlier, when experiencing financial problems, the Management Committee had agreed to take on 'running mortgages', which cost £4,500 to clear.

three shops, which were run on co-operative production lines to return a dividend on purchases to each customer, also contributed towards financing the educational and social activities. By the end of 1915, the estate had grown to ninety-three houses, but the peak of the 'utopian' period was over.

In spite of difficulties, another fifty houses were built during the 1930s and 40s, bringing the total to one hundred and forty-three; main drains were laid and



The destruction of the 'moni' in the name of progress

walk, once a narrow footpath through to Scraftoft village, was enlarged and named Netherhall Road. It thus becomes very difficult indeed today to identify exactly where Humberstone Garden Suburb properly begins and ends, which probably accounts for the original incorrect entry in Pevsner's Book of Buildings; Leicestershire the gatherer of information was apparently looking at and assessing the wrong houses on the wrong estate.

In the 1970s, under pressure from the Netherhall Estate tenants, who used the Suburb's shops, the City Council decided to make up the roads, for which Anchor Tenants were charged £20,000. The memorial to George Hern - the copper beech and seats - was removed as a 'traffic hazard'; Laburnum Road had already been extended into the west side Council development, and the Council named the walkway through to Keyham Lane, Lilac Walk. Stein's



In 2002 it was decided to celebrate the centenary of the founding of Anchor Tenants with a street party and an exhibition of photographs and memorabilia. As this coincided with the queens golden jubilee, we were able to arrange for the closure of Fern Rise and a part of Laburnum Road for this event.

For a more permanent memorial, it was decided to have a set of wrought iron gates made for the entrance to the Hall, the upper floor of which is now back in use as the estate office. At an opening ceremony, Mrs E. Shore cut the ribbon across the gates.



The 'plate' issued to tenants to commemorate the centenary of the opening of the first pair of cottages

In 2008, a smaller celebration was held to mark the centenary of the 'topping out' of the first pair of 'cottages' on Keyham Lane. A brass plaque marking this event was unveiled on the front of the Hall. A limited edition (150) plate was designed and one was given to every tenant.



The brass plaque on the Hall

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*Extract from last Report and
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An Anchor Boot and Shoe advert from The Link, April 1912

