

W. Redmile & Sons History

The Redmile family has lived in Sheffield for over a hundred years but did not originate here. How the Redmiles came to Sheffield is one example of the growth of the steel industry in Sheffield, from 150 years ago, attracting people from far and wide where employment might have been more difficult to find.



William Redmile
1882-1961

Family Background

Thomas Redmile was born around 1794 in Carlton, Nottinghamshire and was a hose trimmer; in other words, working in the Nottingham cotton and lace industry. He had several children and his son, Thomas, born in 1830 in Kimberley, Nottinghamshire, was a journeyman cotton bleacher. He moved to Bulwell, Nottinghamshire where he and his wife, Sarah, had numerous children.



George Redmile
1858 - 1939

The eldest, George (1858-1939) married Betsy Thorpe (1858-1926). George Redmile did not go into the cotton industry but became a joiner. Perhaps the lace industry was in decline because one of his brothers became a mechanic and two other coalminers. George and Betsy had eight children starting with George (1878-1903), born in Bulwell, and finishing with Arnold (1904-1976) in Sheffield.

William Redmile (1882-1961) was born in Bulwell. There is a school prize given to William by the Nottingham School Board in 1888 and another by the Sheffield School Board in 1893, so sometime between those years George Redmile moved his family from Bulwell to Sheffield. At that time Sheffield was an expanding boom town and a magnet for labour, mainly for the steel and cutlery industry.

More importantly for George, there was a high level of new building taking place which was an obvious reason for a joiner seeking work to move here. We are fairly sure that he worked on the pagoda style roof of the Locarno in London Road which still exists, but otherwise do not know where he worked. All George's sons went into the building trade, George (junior) and William being known to be joiners. John Thomas (1888-1949), Curtis (Born 1895) and Arnold all set up their own building companies.



William Redmile as a young man



William and Annie Redmile



William Redmile in later life

In 1911 William Redmile married Annie Fox (1886-1971) and they had two sons, William (Bill) Kenneth (1912-1969) and Curtis (1914-1996).

A Hopeful Beginning

Having seen their father help his brothers set up in business, they persuaded him to set up on his own account and W. Redmile and Sons was born in June 1933. Although Curtis had been apprenticed to his grandfather (George) for seven years as a joiner, he and Bill needed to be able to lay bricks and stone, lay roof tiles and be general all-rounders. To start with they worked as sub- contractors not only for their father but also for other builders until the company grew large enough to employ them full time. The original Cash Book, running from July 1933 until October 1941, still exists and is a fascinating document.



Curtis Redmile
1914-1996

10m	Redmile	21 Dec 1933	4	0	0
10m	Bather	21 Dec "	3	5	2
10m	K Redmile	21 Dec "	1	14	5
4	Redmile	21 Dec "	1	8	6
2	Gibbs	21 Dec "	2	8	1
		Health Insurance		7	6
		Stamp		5	0
		Employment		1	6
		"			
			13	10	2

Wages Reconciliation for Dec 21 1933

		Bills Paid	1933.					
July	10	1933. Town Hall Water Dept	Cash P	1	11	6		
July	10	" Woodside Paving Co.	Cash CM	4	18	9		
July	14	" J. W. Windle Ladder	Cash Cap	2	0	0		
July	"	" Midland Employers Mutual Insurance Ltd	Cash CM	1	0	0		
Aug	26	1933 John Baker & Son	Cheque T	28	0	0		
Sept	2	" J Redmayne	Cheque CM	11	10	0		
Sept	14	" Gentin Poros	Cheque CM	1	7	1		
Sept	18	" Miles & Wyreaves.	Cheque CM	2	17	8		
Oct	14	1932 J Enock	Cheque CM	14	7	0		
Oct	3	" Cyos Company	Cash P	1	18	2		
Oct	11	" Chas. Black	Cheque T	14	5	0		
Oct	14	" H. J. Atkinson	Cheque CM	8	6	6		
Nov	14	" Insurance Policy for 10 th Redmills	Cash	1	0	0		
"	"	" " " for Fire			14	0		
Nov	5	" H. Bingham Glass Merchand Bull Lane	Cheque P	3	6	0		
Nov	5	1933 Moorwoods. Harleston Iron Works	Cheque CM	18	18	0		
Nov	5	" Dalton. Comp. Pls	Cheque CM	4	5	2		
Nov	7	" Alfred Shaw	Cash CM	2	14	10		
Oct	13	" Water Dept. Town Hall.	Cash P	1	11	6		
Nov	10	" Gil & Coak	Cash		2	6		
Nov	26	" Gil & Coak	Cash		2	6		
Dec	13	" John Baker & Son	Cheque T	13	5	3		
Dec	11	" Russel & Goswick	Cash		10	6		
Dec	12	1933 W. Emery & Co.	Cheque P	29	0	0		
Dec	15	" W. J. Jones	Cheque CM	38	0	0		
Dec	12	" J. Foster & Co.	Cheque P	3	3	0		
Dec	11	" 2 Bags Coal	Cash		3	0		
Dec	12	" Chas Black	Cheque P	7	9	0		
Dec	14	1933 H. J. Atkinson	Cheque CM	8	6	6		
Dec	16	" J Redmayne	Cheque CM	10	14	8		
Dec	15	" Gas Cook	Cash		13	6		

The First Page of the Cash Book

The life of a small-scale building company went smoothly. Bill married Madge Ward (1914-2006) in 1939 and moved into their new house which the company had built in Dobcroft Road. William, Annie, and Curtis moved next door when their house was finished in 1940.

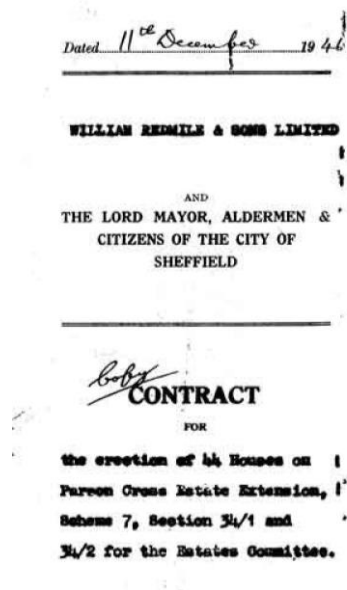
Sheffield Blitz 1940-1942

The coming of the Second World War was not only a shock to the nation but potentially ruinous to the company. It had built several houses for sale at Gleadless and Beauchief and suddenly nobody was buying houses. These all had to be rented and Bill and Curtis, who had both failed their medicals and were rejected by the armed forces, had to go into the Laycock Engineering Works on Archer Road where they remained until bomb damage required builders to repair the damage.

The first bomb fell in Sheffield on the night of August 18th, 1940, and the last fell on July 28th, 1942, with the two worst nights being 12th and 15th December 1940 when much of the centre of Sheffield was obliterated.

Over 40,000 people were made homeless, a total of 3,000 homes were demolished, another 3,000 were badly damaged and 72,000 properties suffered some damage. The company also participated in other war work including airfield construction as far south as Ashbourne. In 1941, Curtis married Kathleen Corthorn (born 1919) and they started married life living with William and Annie, until they were able to buy a plot of land higher up Dobcroft Road and build a house which they moved into with their young family in 1947.





Rebuilding Sheffield

After the war there was a tremendous housing shortage, and the company was contracted to build houses for Sheffield City Council on the Council Estates at Parson Cross and The Manor. In November 1946, W. Redmile & Sons became a Limited Company. During the late 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s contract work was plentiful with council houses and schools being built, hospitals being extended and industry, commerce and banks requiring new or extended premises around Sheffield and North Derbyshire. Perhaps the most prestigious contract was the construction of Abbeydale Boys Grammar School in 1958, but this was only one of many major works which the company completed.

A New Era

The life of a contractor is always a fickle one and before 1950 the company had started looking for land so that it could build houses for sale on its own account which would provide a more stable occupation. A piece was bought at Gleadless from Florence Redmile, the widow of John Thomas Redmile (1888-1949) and then in the early 1950s, Curtis took the gamble of starting to buy land in Dronfield, which at that time of limited car ownership seemed to many to be a long way from Sheffield, eventually building thousands of houses on the Holmesdale and Hallowes Estates. Other houses were built at Birdwell, Stannington, Woodhouse, Killamarsh, Chesterfield, Baslow, Brook Meadows, and Mosborough.

William Redmile died in 1961 and from about the same time Bill's health began to fail. By the time Bill died in 1969, Curtis had already assumed all the responsibility for what a major company was now. He never formally retired but from 1980 his own health began to decline, and he died in 1996, by which time his son had become Managing Director.

Bill's son Gordon William (born 1943) joined the company in the 1960s and retired in 2004. In about 1980 when it was realised that trading conditions had radically changed, the company took the decision not to accept outside contracts but to concentrate on its housing operations alone.



