



NEWS RELEASE

Michael Portillo makes tile for Palace of Westminster on Great British Train Journey

The craftsmanship and skills of the current tile makers at Craven Dunnill Jackfield came under the spotlight, in Michael Portillo's most recent BBC2 TV series of Great British Railway Journeys, which featured a visit to the current factory and Michael Portillo trying his hand at making a tile for the Palace of Westminster.

Michael Portillo paid a special visit, by train, to local company Craven Dunnill Jackfield, which is located in the original tile factory at Jackfield, established in 1872 by Henry Dunnill. Adrian Blundell, Production Director at the company, made a tour of the current tile-making works with him and explained how the railway opened up access to the USA and the British Empire export markets, back in the late 19th century, and helped to make the original company a leading manufacturer of its day – it even had its own liveried rail carriages.

The company still hand-makes tiles, as they were made in the Victorian era, and coincidentally Michael Portillo visited Craven Dunnill Jackfield, just as the company commenced a significant and prestigious new order to supply encaustic floor tiles for the renovation of the highly worn floor of St. Stephen's Hall at The Palace of Westminster; a floor which Portillo had often walked on as a Member of Parliament.

The project for the Palace of Westminster involved the hand-making of around 525 encaustic tiles and took several months to make; a further project for The Palace of Westminster is currently under way. Portillo is shown, on the programme, eager to try his hand at making one of the tiles: under the guidance of Chris Cox, Production Manager, he soon discovers it is not

easy. At the end of his visit his fascination with tile-making and its historical importance has obviously turned to admiration, "Chris, I have walked over these countless times...I had no idea it was such hard work and such craftsmanship". The tile he made was fired and is now part of Craven Dunnill Jackfield's fascinating history.

For further information about Craven Dunnill Jackfield visit www.cravendunnill-jackfield.co.uk or T: 01952 884124

The End

Note to Editor

The programme is part of the series shown on BBC2 December 2010 and January 2011 and currently available on iplayer:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00xhxxf/Great_British_Railway_Journeys_Series_2_Telford_to_Wrexham/

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Images: A variety of captioned images of Michael Portillo at Craven Dunnill Jackfield are attached.

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