

Heritage Statement

Driftwood (39 Steps), Reacliffe Road, Rudyard ST13 8RS
Mr P Worth

1.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

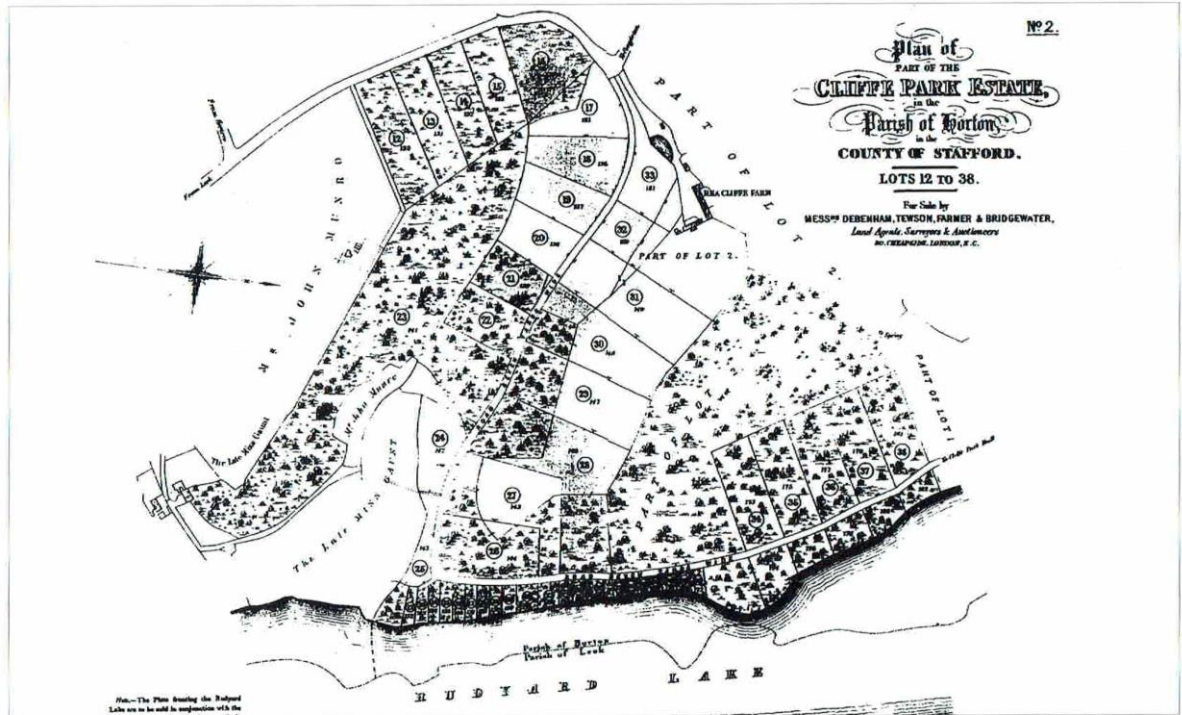
Introduction

- 1.1. This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of an application for the extension of a property on the shore of Rudyard Lake.
- 1.2. Driftwood (39 Steps) is situated on the western shoreline of the lake, surrounded by woodland, and accessed via Reacliffe Road.
- 1.3. The village of Rudyard, including the lake and its surroundings, has been designated a Conservation Area, (as part of the Churnet Valley Masterplan), following a comprehensive review conducted under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and following guidelines from Historic England. The Rudyard Lake frontage is currently under an Article 4 Direction, removing all permitted development rights, as a result of the “piecemeal development of domestic paraphernalia” (Mel Morris Conservation).
- 1.4. The review process involved a conservation appraisal, undertaken by Mel Morris Conservation, in consultation with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, local residents, and a number of stakeholders. The appraisal document was issued in July 2016.

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Description of the Asset

- 2.1. Rudyard is a small lakeside village situated to the west of Leek and close to the Staffordshire-Cheshire border. The 3km long reservoir at its centre was constructed at the turn of the 19th century, as a method of feeding the growing canal network.
- 2.2. The development of the Cliffe Park Estate between 1818 and 1930, together with the opening of the Churnet Valley Railway in 1849, saw the village expand and the lake became a popular weekend destination for day trippers travelling on excursion trains from Manchester and Stoke.
- 2.3. The Cliffe Park Estate was sold in 1875, and a number of plots of land were auctioned off in 1885, before the remainder was purchased by the North Staffordshire Railway Company in 1903. This encouraged the lake to reach the height of its popularity during the Edwardian era, as visitors could hire out motor launches or rowing boats, visit the newly laid golf course or dine at one of many local tearooms that benefitted from the increased tourism.



Extract from the auction catalogue of 13 August 1885, showing the sub-divisions of the Cliffe Park Estate into building plots for villa residences, for weekend chalets and for boathouses. The breaking up of the estate in this manner determined the pattern of land ownership and usage down to the present day.
Christine Chester collection

1 Cliffe Park Estate Auction 1885

- 2.4. Sadly, Rudyard suffered in the latter part of the 20th century but has undergone somewhat of a resurgence in recent years owing to the creation of new recreational buildings overseen by the Rudyard Lake Trust. It is primarily used for boating and watersports, but also benefits from picturesque lakeside and woodland walks, a miniature railway, and numerous holiday homes.
- 2.5. The village itself is characterised primarily by late Victorian and Edwardian architecture, including a number of gritstone cottages, large villas and holiday chalets, all set within a splendid woodland landscape. In addition, “picturesque groupings of traditional and modern boathouses and chalets punctuate the lakeside.” (Mel Morris Conservation)
- 2.6. The numerous “boathouses” were principally established following the 1885 auction of Cliffe Park estate, when small parcels of land were sold off and the small unique structures were built by private owners as boat storage/holiday homes. A covenant existed under the sale, which restricted development to discourage permanent homes on the lakeside.
- 2.7. The most notable boathouses are The Earl of Macclesfield’s boathouse (the oldest, built in the 1850s), the uniquely jettied Lady of the Lake, Lower Horton Lodge (c. 1891), and the former Trent & Mersey Canal Boathouse, now the Visitor Centre. These are large structures, primarily gritstone, with characteristic gated wet moorings beneath the accommodation above.

- 2.8. In the early part of the 20th century, there was a large increase in the number of boathouses and chalets appearing along the western edge of the lake and, by the 1960s/70s, there were no less than 27. By the early 2000s, a number of planning applications had been submitted and approved for the demolition or extension of some of these buildings to create large dwellings or holiday homes, such as Hideaway and Sandy Cove.
- 2.9. It seems that Driftwood, also known as 'The 39 Steps' owing to the number of steep steps down from its access on Reacliffe Road, was part of this mid-century boom. A boathouse first appears in this location on the 1970 OS map, though in what looks to be a considerably smaller footprint. Prior to this, the site was principally woodland. The planning report from application SMD/2000/0785, for the replacement chalet, describes the previous structure as 3.1 x 4.7 x 3.5m to the ridge, consisting of a sitting area and very small kitchen atop an existing boathouse. The current structure is approximately 6.9 x 5.2m in footprint, and the original "boathouse" at water level has since been converted into living accommodation.
- 2.10. An application to allow use of the property as a permanent dwellinghouse was refused and then subsequently approved via appeal in 2008 (Ref: SMD/2008/0961).
- 2.11. The property is an Arnold Aver Timber World log cabin constructed in Arctic pine on a reinforced concrete base. The lower storey utilises cavity brickwork walls and the roof is profiled metal.
- 2.12. Internally, the property comprises living room at lower ground/water level, small galley kitchen, store, bathroom and second bedroom at ground/entrance level and a master bedroom within a mezzanine above. To the reservoir side, externally there is a covered balcony as well as a bbq area and jetty out onto the water.
- 2.13. The property is serviced by mains electricity and an oil fired boiler, and utilises a septic tank.

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Assessment of its Significance

- 3.1. In order to assess the significance, we must look at the contribution the property makes to the heritage asset which, in this case, is the Rudyard conservation area.
- 3.2. Driftwood is a relatively new structure and offers very little in historical or evidential value within its lakeside setting. It appears the original structure did sit atop an existing "boathouse" but this would have been at a much more domestic scale than the grand gated moorings beneath the Earl of Macclesfield or Lady of the Lake boathouses, and has since been infilled with a glazed frontage in order to utilise the space as living accommodation.
- 3.3. There are very few original boathouses left along the lakeside. As in this case, many have been demolished to make way for larger premises or extended and altered beyond recognition. However, the continued presence of such properties, whether boathouses, chalets, holiday homes or permanent residences, contributes a significant amount of historical value to the lake frontage. They are a key indicator of the lake's history as a popular leisure destination from the early 20th century up to the present day.
- 3.4. The architecture along the lake front is distinctly eclectic and has evolved naturally over time. Each boathouse is unique in its design, but all retain an element of aesthetic merit, both independently and as a whole.



2 OS Map 1970

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The Design Concept

- 4.1. The application proposes the addition of two single storey extensions to the entrance level storey of the property. The first, to the rear, will house a new bedroom, with part of the existing bathroom and kitchen altered to form a separate ensuite and bathroom. The extension is approximately 2.6 x 4.1m in footprint, bringing it level with the retaining wall at the rear.
- 4.2. The second is a larger side extension to replace the existing lean-to store, creating a spacious kitchen and utility area.
- 4.3. Both extensions will reflect the existing in design and materials. The rear extension will be gabled with a matching pitch, but the ridge is set lower so as to appear subservient. The side extension will be similarly gabled, replacing the existing monopitch timber shingle roof. There is a single window to the front elevation, and a door to the rear. Windows and doors are to be in timber to match the existing.

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The Impact

- 5.1. Rudyard has been designated a conservation area, and permitted development rights along the lake frontage removed under Article 4. This is a result of the increase in "piecemeal" infill development described by the conservation appraisal (2016).
- 5.2. Several large extensions or new build residences (in place of much smaller boathouses) have been permitted along the lakeside in the last 20 years. The conservation appraisal states that this has resulted in a haphazard appearance that lacks any cohesive design or character. However, it could be argued that this evolution of architectural styles still contributes some value, both in historic but also aesthetic terms. The fact that the majority of these lakeside properties are constructed in timber, albeit in a variety of styles, gives the lakeside a character entirely separate to that of the main village.
- 5.3. The addition of the rear extension will impact very little on the character of the conservation area. The property isn't visible from Reacliffe Road due to the difference in levels, and the subservient nature of the rear extension means that it shouldn't be visible from the lakeside.
- 5.4. Similarly, the side extension won't be visible from Reacliffe Road. Any potential impact will be felt via views across the lake, particularly from the eastern shoreline. Driftwood is one of several properties along the western edge of

Rudyard Lake, with two properties in close proximity – Water's Edge to the north and The Bothy to the south. Both are substantial structures, with Water's Edge having benefitted from a large side extension approved in 2007. The proposed side extension, whilst increasing the visible size of the property from the lake, will not be disproportionate to the surrounding dwellings.

- 5.5. Both extensions will provide much needed additional accommodation, particularly to the kitchen, which is incredibly small for a permanent 2-3 bed dwelling. The benefits of creating an enlarged living space should outweigh the negligible impact that may occur as a result.
- 5.6. In conclusion, it is felt that the proposals represent a well-proportioned development that is in keeping with the surrounding area and has less than substantial impact on the conservation area.



3 Driftwood (present day)