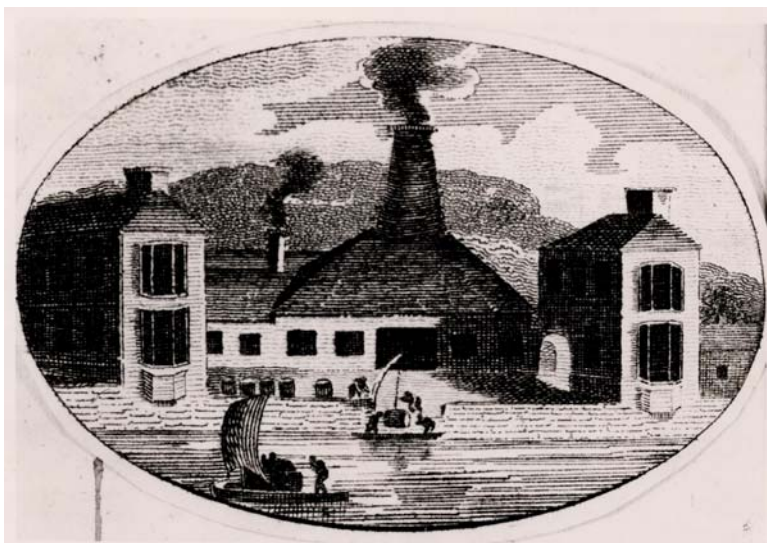


Glass making in Gateshead

As well as the more general engineering industries, Gateshead was the home of specialised trades such as glass-making and rope-making. By the eighteenth century, there was a bottle works, at the South Shore, which later expanded to include the manufacture of plate glass, before it closed in 1840 after a life of about one hundred years. Pipewellgate was the centre of this trade, the first glassworks being established there in 1760 by Joseph Sowerby, at the west end of this street, followed in 1814 by Joseph Price and his Durham Glass Works (just west of Brett's oil works). Price later had an interest in another glass firm in the same street. Letters from Sowerby show the state of the industry in 1833: there were five glassworks employing about 500 men and £100,000 in capital. Skilled tradesmen worked an average of four days per week for £2 while labourers earned only 18/-. There was a decline in the glassmaking from this time but during the 1850s several smaller firms sprang up and some survived until the turn of the century when only two companies remained, Sowerby's and Davidson's. George Davidson established Teams Glass-Works in 1868. Both manufactured moulded or pressed glass products, to give the impression of cut glass but at a lower price, and ornaments. Their local trade depended on hawkers who spent the night at the works and left in the morning, laden with glassware.

Sowerby moved to East Street in 1850 and in 1881 became a limited company, changing its name to Sowerby's Ellison Glass Works Ltd. In 1889 a subsidiary company, Gateshead Stained Glass Company was formed, with the unusual feature that the principal employees were shareholders (an idea often suggested today as a means of curbing industrial strife). An example of the work of this firm can be seen in the 'King James' Hospital Window' in St. Mary's Church. William Wailes, a celebrated stained-glass manufacturer, lived in Gateshead; it was he who had Saltwell Towers constructed. The two firms of Sowerby and Davidson are still in business today; the former has carried on business for two hundred and fourteen years, the oldest in Gateshead.



Joseph Price's Glassworks, Pipewellgate

From *A Short History of Gateshead* by I C Carlton