

WARWICKSHIRE

Industrial Archaeology Society

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EDITORIAL

What does Industrial Archaeology mean to you? Not in the literal sense, but at the personal level. We all presumably have an interest in the subject, but I am sure that the role it plays in each of our lives differs.

During a recent holiday in North Wales, I inevitably found myself on several occasions, driving up the narrow road through Deiniolen and Dinorwig, to the 'bus turn round' at the foot of the immense Garret side tips of Dinorwic Quarry. Each visit, I found myself reflecting upon why I am drawn to this area.

It is not the most attractive of locations, although it is undeniably atmospheric, especially with cloud low over Elidir Fawr and the mewing of the resident pair of buzzards echoing off the tips. There is much of interest in the landscape and every visit yields another detail to explain and fit into the bigger picture. Photographing what I discover, in a way that captures the spirit of the place, is a continuing challenge too and one reason why I return time after time. I know I can always do

better.

All of which I think gives a clue to what Industrial Archaeology means to me. Put simply, it is a walk with a purpose! So much more satisfying than walking for the sake of it, with the added benefits of exercising the mind as well as the body, while keeping everyday pressures at a distance for a few hours.

Which raises in turn the question why, as a Society, we do not venture into the outdoors more often? True, there has been the tradition of an annual walk led by Peter Chater, who invariably devises a route of great interest, but requiring little physical effort. As a consequence these have been well supported. However, other such events have met with mixed success. A trip to the Welshpool and Llanfair Railway, organised some years ago by Roger Cragg, was not well supported by members I thought. On the other hand, John Selby's tour of the Oxford canal at Fenny Compton last summer, did attract a good following.

So what makes a good excursion and how might the Society ensure good support from members? If you do have any thoughts on the matter, let me know. John Haslam, who has considerable experience of organising coach trips, is keen to arrange an outing for the Society, possibly to Blaenavon. To take advantage of such skills and enthusiasm in the membership, can surely only benefit us as a Society.

Mark W. Abbott

SOCIETY NEWS

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that following the agreement of the AGM to retain subscriptions at their 2000 / 2001 levels, these are now due. The amount is £10.00 per person inclusive of partner. A further £1.00 per person is payable at each meeting to help meet the cost of refreshments. Please make cheques payable to Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society. To save on postage costs, any payments received by post will be acknowledged by receipt at the subsequent meeting.

PROGRAMME

A full programme for the forthcoming season is set out on the back page of this newsletter. Once again this represents the sole work of the Chairman, Toby Cave, to whom our thanks are due. One meeting awaits confirmation of a speaker and members will of course be advised of developments.

SUMMER WALK

This summer was the first for many years in which Peter Chater did not lead the now traditional evening walk, in a local area with industrial connections. This was because of the national outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease, which caused severe restrictions on footpath access throughout Warwickshire, as elsewhere in the Country. All being well, one or more walks will be arranged for next summer. Suggestions for possible routes, of about two miles in length, are welcome.

NEWSLETTER

Meeting Reports *by Arthur Astrop*

June 2001 Jo Bell:

The Working Boats Project

Boats are floating listed buildings! It was thus that Jo Bell started her talk on the 'Working Boats Project' currently being tackled by British Waterways with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Many areas of preservation and conservation of long-lost waterway life are covered by the 3-year project but the centre piece must be that part of the programme aimed at restoring ten specific working boats. These boats have been carefully chosen to illustrate different aspects of the time when our canals were serious 'work places' rather than, as today, merely pleasure grounds.

Atlas, for example, is a boat built in 1930 for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Co. and is being restored complete with its butty, the Leo. Saggita and Carina, both built in 1936, have been converted into floating classrooms designed so that children can learn at first hand what it meant to work and live in a narrow boat and to earn enough money to support the family it carried. Also built in 1936, the Scorpio was a gravel carrier, and is complete with its butty the Malus. At the height of the canal-carrying trade, there were 10,000 or more 'joey' boats on the waterways. Long, cargo-carrying day boats they had neither cabin nor motor and because they were not highly rated few remain today. Most were simply 'sunk', as an easy way of disposing of them, but the project has one which is being carefully refurbished.

Another particularly interesting item is a piling rig, built in the 1950s, which will be used to demonstrate the method by which the banks of canals were once reinforced. Working boats plied the canals all the year round, even in the depths of the harshest winters, and work is in hand restoring the Nansen, a powerful icebreaker. It was an appropriate touch, when it was first launched, to name this boat after the Norwegian Arctic explorer. Finally, mention must be made of the Birmingham, built in 1912 and most unusually along traditional shipbuilding lines. Below the waterline, its hull has all the curvatures associated with offshore boats and it draws no less than 3ft 9in. It is moored at Tardebigge and, needless to say, with that draught it doesn't move far on the canals of today!

Other aspects of life on working boats covered by the project include a wide variety of artefacts, also the traditional painting skills, especially the regional variations on the classic 'roses and castles' designs which adorned the boats themselves and some of their equipment. In a conservation project of this scope and magnitude, Jo Bell conceded it is inevitable that some compromises must be made.

For example, replacement parts cannot always be made out of the type of wood originally used. Nonetheless every effort is being made by the project to adhere to four basic guidelines, namely to 'make it truthful, relevant, local and alive'.

Canal folk, Jo pointed out, had a uniquely 'linear' view of life. They knew people hundreds of miles in each direction up and down the waterways, but had little or no contact with anyone either side of the banks. Many of those working the boats were, by today's standards, illiterate. As a result, their social culture existed in oral rather than written form. Consequently much of it is lost, and as the years go by even more will disappear. The work of the project therefore includes attempts to record as much of 'social and family culture of the cut' as possible, before it is too late.

Further Afield: Parys Mountain

Parys Mountain is situated in the north east of Anglesey, 2 km south of the small town of Amlwch. Its particular significance is that, in the latter part of the 18th Century, it was the site of largest copper mine in the world and it has proven history of copper extraction dating back to the Bronze Age. Associated with the site were other chemical industries, based on mining by-products. These produced ochre pigments, sulphur, vitriol and alum, and an ochre works was in production on the mountain until the 1960s.

Recognition of the unique nature of this landscape led to the establishment, in 1997, of the Amlwch Industrial Heritage Trust. It has charitable status and its aims are: to conserve the natural and industrial landscapes of Parys Mountain and Amlwch Port; to promote scientific and historical research and a fuller understanding of these two sites; and to present them for the appreciation of the public. This has resulted in the establishment of an excellent way marked trail on the mountain and a museum in Amlwch Port. In addition, access has been regained to the underground workings that remain above the water table and the intention is to reopen blocked drainage levels, so that exploration can continue deeper into the workings.

A visit provides a fascinating day out, although the trail on the mountain does require a reasonable degree of stamina and a strong pair of boots. The project also serves as an excellent demonstration of what can be done to promote industrial archaeology in a positive and accessible manner. Recommended!

The AGM and Members' Evening

July 2001

The Society's AGM and Members' Evening

Members attending the 12th Annual General Meeting of WIAS heard an encouraging report from Chairman Toby Cave, who was able to announce a marked improvement in the Society's finances, and increases in both its membership and the attendance at its monthly meetings. Opinion indicated wide appreciation of the Committee's choice of speakers in the year under review, and in fact the attendance of 51 members at the April meeting (addressed by Barrie Trinder), constituted a record. Toby also confirmed that, while he was willing to serve as Chairman for one more year, thereafter he wished to retire. It was pointed out that, if Martin Green were to be chosen to succeed him then the post of Secretary to the Society would become vacant, and all members were urged to address themselves to that problem.

In his report as the Society's Treasurer, Mark Abbott presented the detailed accounts, explaining how the improvement in finances resulted from, among other reasons, a combination of last year's increases in annual membership and meeting attendance fees, together with an unanticipated reduction in the charges for hire of Warwick School facilities. Opportunity was taken at that point to express the Society's appreciation of the generous support of its activities which is made by the School, in a variety of different ways. In view of the Society's improved financial position, Mark wondered if members felt the meeting attendance fee should revert to 50p. It was the unanimous decision, however, that it should remain at £1.00, both as a 'cushion' for the future and to give the Society more ability to 'pay its way' whenever possible. Following re-election of the Committee en bloc, and a vote of thanks to its members, the 2001 AGM was closed.

The evening then heard two talks by WIAS members. First, Martin Green presented a series of slides taken during a recent visit to Belfast, giving a fascinating insight both into the past industrial history of the Province and a pictorial representation of some of the results of its last 40 years of anguish. Shots of the mute and abandoned factories of its traditional industries were mixed with those of civic buildings erected when it was a prosperous city, and then further intermingled with views of some of the murals and crude graffiti which today bear witness to the tribal conflicts still raging in its streets. Martin's talk was a poignant reminder of a once proud and thriving city whose industrial archaeology is either

crumbling away or is the 'blackboard' on which the lurid slogans of its sectarian strife are sprayed.

The evening concluded with a talk by John Brace in which he traced the early efforts of Stratford upon Avon to provide its citizens with an adequate supply of clean water and efficient sewage disposal. He tackled the period from about 1840 to the first few years of the 20th century, during which those efforts were beset both with obstacles and, at times, with incompetence. Stratford, then, was little more than a large village and sources of water within its own bailiwick were few. Snitterfield Brook, for instance, was outwith its reach but was later to become accessible, although it was prone to 'dry up' for fairly long periods. Flowers Brewery had its own artesian wells, and for a period supplied water to the town, but even when water and sewage pipes had been laid it was discovered that somehow their actual connection to its houses had been unaccountably overlooked. Today's Stratford citizens would be astonished to know how their grandparents overcame such difficulties!

Review: Industrial Gwynedd

Industrial Gwynedd, Volumes 1-4, Plateway Press 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999

The industrial history of the modern county of Gwynedd is dominated by mining and quarrying, especially the extraction of slate. This is reflected in the content of this occasional journal from Plateway Press.

Overall production quality is excellent. Photographs are well reproduced, good clear maps and drawings are appended where appropriate, and the writing style is accessible to the general reader. The occasional article is in Welsh, but an English abstract is always provided.

The most recent edition, Volume 4, 1999, is dedicated to Dinorwic Quarry. Articles include a description of the Dinorwic Quarry Railway's Crampton locomotive, *Fire Queen* and an account of the recording, and restoration to working order, of the Vivian Quarry V2 incline. However, not all the content is slate industry oriented. Previous volumes, for example, have covered the Parys Mountain Copper Mine (Volume 1, 1996) and Broad Gauge at Holyhead (Volume 2, 1997).

Back copies are available from the publishers: Plateway Press, Taverner House, Harling Road, East Harling, Norwich, NR16 2QR. Price varies from £5.00 to £7.50.

Programme 2001 / 2002

2001

Thursday 13th September

Roger Cragg: *The History of Railway Signalling.*

Thursday 11th October

Brian Rednap, former City Engineer of Coventry:
Thoughts on the Planning of Coventry from a Historical Point of View.

Thursday 8th November

Nigel Crowe of British Waterways: *Recent Work at British Waterways.*

Thursday 13th December

Jo Bell: *Exploring Telford's Welsh Road.*

The majority of time at these meetings is occupied by our speaker, followed by refreshments and a subsequent period for questions and follow up material. The final part of the meeting is then usually taken up with a brief contribution from one of our members, often concentrating on an aspect of the industrial archaeology of Warwickshire. We are always keen to have contributions from members or visitors ~ do not be afraid to put yourself forward for one of these presentations. Occasional additional events will also take place during the year, and members will be duly notified of these.

Please note that this programme may be subject to change without notice.

2002

Thursday 10th January

To be arranged.

Thursday 14th February

J. M. Carrington: *The Motorway Archive and the Preservation of Documents Telling the Story of the Construction of British Motorways.*

Thursday 14th March

Anthony Coulls: *Power in Manchester; the Energy Collection of the Museum of Science and Industry.*

Thursday 11th April

Brian Stokes: *How Automotive Products Became Leamington Spa's Largest Manufacturing Company.*

Thursday 9th May

Geoffrey Starmer: *Changes in LA in Northamptonshire During the Past 35 Years.*

Thursday 13th June

Peter Lee: *Railways in the Warwickshire Coalfield.*

Thursday 11th July

Annual General Meeting, followed by Lyndon F. Cave: *How to Make Cement and Concrete; the Warwickshire Cement Industry.*

WIAS Meetings

Meetings of the Society are held on the second Thursday of each month in the Sixth Form Centre at Warwick School, Myton Road, Warwick, starting at 7.30pm. A map of how to find the Sixth Form Centre at Warwick School is available from the Secretary. Visitors should park in the Junior School / Sports Hall car park. The Sixth Form Centre is next to the car park.

Subscriptions 2000 / 2001

£10.00 per person (or couple).

Cheques payable to Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society please.

An additional payment of £1.00 per person is due at each meeting to meet the cost of refreshments.

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