

# WARWICKSHIRE

## Industrial Archaeology Society

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### EDITORIAL

With this Newsletter entering its fourth year of publication, I feel the time has come to re-evaluate the layout and design. The one major change I would like to make is to use photographs. This always was a planned intention, but reproduction constraints: production is by photocopying which does not reproduce continuous tone images well, and cost considerations, have so far prevented this. However, software is now available to the Society that will yield masters that can be laser printed, a process that will reproduce photographs acceptably.

Therefore, I intend to print some proofs to see if photographs can be used in the future. This will require some major changes to the master pages that underpin each Newsletter, an ideal opportunity to make other changes to the design. I am happy with the current 'look', but would nevertheless welcome feedback from members as to any perceived shortcomings in the layout that might be rectified.

Mark W. Abbott

### NAPTON ENGINE UPDATE

One feature of the Oxford Canal's Napton pumping engine scheme, described in the last Newsletter, which could not be located on site, was the tunnel that conveyed the feeder water the last half mile or so to the engine at GR467591. Assuming the tunnel was bored conventionally for the time, by means of working outwards from a series of shafts sunk along the intended line, some surface evidence of these shafts and the resulting spoil might be expected to remain.

The land under which the tunnel ran is farmland, so casual field research was not possible. However, the farmer of the land was fortunately encountered during the site visit and he confirmed there were occasional patches of lias clay in the fields over the tunnel, which could represent the remains of spoil raised from tunnelling shafts. This is the type of feature that could show as a crop marks, given favourable soil conditions, so it was thought that evidence of the tunnel might show up on an aerial photograph.

Getmapping plc photographed the whole of England from the air as a millennium project and images from this survey are available on the internet from a number of sites; for example [www.multimap.com](http://www.multimap.com). Searching eventually located a good quality aerial shot of the required location at [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk). This proved to be a revelation.

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### SOCIETY NEWS

#### Programme.

The programme to July 2005, is as follows:

#### October 14th

Mr. David Fowler: *The History of Cheese and Cheese Making in Warwickshire* (Includes a tasting of Warwickshire cheeses!)

#### November 11th

Mr. John Boynton: *The London and Birmingham Railway*.

#### December 9th

Mr. John Burton: *Hat Making and Ribbon Weaving in the Bedworth Area*.

#### January 13th

Dr. Mike Hodder and Mrs. Toni Demidowicz: *The Birmingham Glass Industry*.

#### February 10th

Mr. George Sayell: *The Old Mineral Line, West Somerset*.

#### March 10th

Mr. David Depledge: *Coventry Airport: Past, Present and Future*

#### April 14th

Members' Evening: *The Industrial Archaeology of the Rugby District*.

#### May 12th

Mr. Peter Cross-Rudkin: *William James: Father of the Railways?*

#### June 9th

Mr. Martin Green: *Aspects of the Industrial Archaeology of New Zealand*.

#### July 14th

Mr. Mike Buxton: *Milestones: Warwickshire and Beyond*.

#### Subscriptions

Members are reminded that subscriptions for the 2004/2005 season are now due. The amount due remains at £10.00 per person or couple. Cheques payable to *Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society*, please.

# NEWSLETTER

# Meeting Reports *by Arthur Astrop*

June 2004 Dr. George Noszlopy

## *Public Sculpture in the Midlands: Some Industrial Connections*

There was a time when the first appearance of any piece of public sculpture was unthinkable without a solemn ceremony, a formal unveiling, a gathering of local dignitaries, and an outbreak of civic pomp (not to say pomposity). The public was expected to attend, but to restrict its participation to polite applause, and at the most to 'three (appropriately respectful) cheers'.

The second half of the 20th century has seen all that change, as has the subject matter which today is considered appropriate for a 'public sculpture'. Gone are equestrian statues of Dukes, generals and mayors and in their place have appeared sculptures which celebrate achievements, and not infrequently local industries. In his address to the June meeting, Dr George Noszlopy, Professor of History and Art at the University of Central England, illustrated this change in subject matter, and attitude towards, public sculpture with an outstanding selection of slides.

Professor Noszlopy has written two books on his subject (*Public Sculpture in Birmingham* also in *Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull*), and further publications are in preparation. He started his talk with illustrations of 19th century public sculptures, some of which he suggested tried to pass themselves off as 'fine art', and the contrast with 20th century ideas for public sculpture was thus all the more marked. The beam engine, for example, which stands proudly on a ring-road roundabout in Birmingham, commemorates the vital part the City played in the development of steam power; and the sculpture of winding gear for a pithead, commissioned by the Nuneaton and Bedworth Council, celebrates the importance that mining once held for those towns.

Coventry, Dr Noszlopy pointed out, is particularly rich in examples of modern public sculptures, which commemorate many subjects from the arrival of the canals to the silk ribbon and motor car industries. In many cases it is an industry product which is represented, but for the waterways it is the splendid slightly larger than life-size bronze statue of James Brindley which dominates the canal basin in the City centre. Other examples of public sculpture in Coventry include: *The Journeyman*, *Children Playing* (which has echoes of Peter Brueghel the Elder), *The Coventry Boy* and, of course, the controversial *Ribbon Sculpture* which rears skywards on a traffic island in the Foleshill Rd.

Further afield, Professor Noszlopy illustrated a sculpture in Redditch which is a stylized water wheel

of the type used to power factories making the needles for which the town was famous. In Burton-on-Trent there is a powerfully realistic sculpture of a cooper making a beer barrel; in Dudley another of a man 'legging' a canal boat through a section of tunnel; and in Telford a striking sculpture in steel of a pit pony pulling a truck in a coal mine. His final slide, however, was perhaps the most impressive of all. In Newcastle-under-Lyme there is a sculpture of a coal miner pushing a loaded truck on rails in which every muscle is taut, and the 'effort' being applied to move the load is simply palpable. This slide alone showed the distance public sculpture has come in the second half of the 20th century.

### **Napton Engine Update *continued*:**

Not only did it show a clear linear crop mark in the grass of uncultivated fields above the tunnel line, but also a number of small circular depressions along this feature, which might be interpreted as evidence of the tunnelling shafts. At its southern end the crop mark connects with the small enclosure where the engine was sited, while in the other direction, extrapolating the feature across cultivated fields gives an intersection with the small stream where the flow of this and the surface feeder were noted to meet.

If this crop mark does show the line of the tunnel, it does not match the line as drawn by the Ordnance Survey or the different line shown on the sketch map accompanying the article in *Industrial Archaeology Review XV 2* Spring 1993, previously quoted.<sup>1</sup> The crop mark line is closer to the latter map; including an intersection with the small surface stream further south and before the possible intersection point where the stream and surface feeder now meet (the stream has a right angled bend hereabouts, hence the two possible intersection points). However, anecdotal evidence suggests the tunnel entrance was at the pool where the water flows now coincide, although there is now no evidence of this.

Final proof of the tunnel line will require further field work in the future. Meanwhile, members with an internet connection may request a copy of the aerial photograph by email from myself, or visit [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk) to view the photograph. Search for the map extract first and then choose the aerial photo option.

**Mark W. Abbott**

1. Andrew Jim *Canal Pumping Engines* *Industrial Archaeology Review*, XV 2, Spring 1993.

# Members' Evening

July 2004

## AGM and Members' Evening

Following the Society's 2004 Annual General Meeting\* members settled down to enjoy a series of presentations by speakers drawn from within their own ranks. As always, this exercise served to remind us of the depth of knowledge which resides, often insufficiently tapped, among our members.

Mike James took us back to 1959 and the building of Leamington's reservoir, a major civil engineering undertaking with which he was intimately involved. Situated adjacent to Welch's Meadow, the reservoir was required to serve Leamington's expanding population, for which the supply coming hitherto from wells in the Campion Hills was no longer adequate.

Designed to hold 25 million gallons, the new reservoir presented a number of tricky problems from the start. Alluvial clay excavated to form the reservoir itself was unsuitable to be used for the earth banks around its perimeter, and an 'exchange' of more suitable soil from another area nearby, transported via a temporary Bailey Bridge over the Leam, had to be arranged. The alluvial clay beneath the earth banks was also unsuitable as a foundation for the latter, and advice on how that problem could be overcome was eventually provided by consultation with the Soil Mechanics Dept at Birmingham University.

Work continued throughout the winter of 1959/60 when the weather, and particularly a greater than average rainfall, produced some truly dreadful working conditions. Indeed, ground conditions eventually became so bad that the tractors and scrapers originally used for earth-moving were totally defeated, and drag-lines had to be brought in to replace them.

Following Mike's talk, Denis Crips explained how, on his return to England in 1999 from working in Saudi Arabia, he decided to start looking at some IA sites of interest in Warwickshire. As a result, he was able to show a variety of slides taken in the north of the County, notably around the Atherstone/Mancetter areas. Items of interest included remains of a granite quarry, canal facilities, watermills, and evidence of a tramway near Mancetter.

A topic on a totally different scale, namely the classic 'painting of the Forth Bridge' problem, was Roger Cragg's chosen subject. Following the introduction of the Health & Safety at Work Act, maintenance of the bridge in fact came to a stop for several years, because, of course, the practices used

so successfully and satisfactorily in the past were now totally 'illegal!' Under the terms of the Act, for example, no work could be undertaken except with the aid of scaffolding and, as many of Roger's slides showed, the amount and complexity of scaffolding needing to be erected looked almost like another bridge in itself!

Much of the surface of the steelwork needed to be sandblasted down to bare metal before priming and painting, and for this work huge curtains of plastic sheeting had to be stretched over the scaffolding. Roger was one of a very small number of those chosen by ballot to have a conducted tour of the work, and he made the most of his privileged position to take some truly spectacular colour slides, not least from the very top of one of bridge towers.

The evening was concluded by a series of slides presented by Martin Green and covering a wide variety of IA sites, including Bluemel's Wolston factory (now demolished); the workshops of Newman Bros, coffin makers in Birmingham; and the remains of the recently demolished Potterton boiler works in Warwick.

\* For those not present at the July meeting, copies of the Chairman's and Treasurer's Reports, together with the presentation of accounts, can be had on application to the Secretary.

## Publications

The following publications have been recently received by the Society, and are available for loan from the Treasurer:

1. Smith T. and Carr B. *A Guide to the Industrial Archaeology of Hertfordshire and the Lea Valley*, Association for Industrial Archaeology, 2004.

This is the latest in the series of guides produced by the AIA to tie in with annual conferences. This year's conference was based in Hatfield and the guide not only covers the county of Hertfordshire but also the Lea valley from Luton to the head of Bow Creek in Greater London. As ever, a useful overview.

2. *Archive*, Issue 43, Lightmoor Press, 2004.

The usual fascinating photograph-led selection of articles on aspects of industrial archaeology. Noteworthy for its local connection is an article about James Starley and the Coventry Sewing Machine Company. The lead article about the Hetton Railway and the operation of its inclined planes, is also particularly interesting.

# Industrial Archaeology and Landscape *by Mark Abbott*

## A Personal View of Industrial Archaeology in the Landscape

**T**he term Industrial Archaeology can refer to many different things; artefacts, structures, sites, social history and even landscapes and it is the latter that I find of greatest interest.

My earliest introduction to industrial archaeology was as a landscape; a mining landscape, albeit on a small scale. During the late 1960's, family holidays were taken in a rented house at Praa Sands in Cornwall. Obviously the main attraction was the nearby beach, but fortunately my parents were also believers in walking as a recreation and a favourite route led eastwards along the coastal footpath to Rinsey Cove. Here there was an engine house. As often in Cornwall, it was perched impossibly close to the sea and in those less safety conscious times was complete with a crumbling open shaft surrounded by ramshackle wire, an open adit on the beach and a complement of tips full of minerals. I was fascinated. On numerous occasions I peered as closely as I dared into the shaft, scoured the tips for interesting samples, and wondered how something so industrial had come to be built in so remote and beautiful a location.

The mine was the Wheal Prosper and its workings are over 450 ft deep. The engine house dates from 1860 and housed a 30 inch engine which pumped to the adit level on the beach. However, the mine had worked earlier in the 19th Century and raised an average of 860 tons of ore per annum between 1832 and 1849. It finally closed in 1865.

Yet despite the engine house's industrial origin it did not, with hindsight, and from recent photographs, seem out of place. Its monumental presence added something to the landscape and built as it was from the local slate, known as 'killas', it had weathered to be part of the landscape from which it had been built. Far from being piece of industrial blight, it was a visual asset.

And this is the key to my personal perspective of industrial archaeology as landscape.

The remains of past industry can be a visual blot,

but often if left to gradually decay and weather, a distinctive and sometimes not altogether unattractive landscape will emerge. Something that, in its own way, can be as visually stimulating as the grand view or a mountain landscape. Those parts of the local flora and fauna that can adapt do so and gradually take over the remains, soften the harsh outlines and integrate the remains into the surroundings. As an example take the remnants of the lime and cement industry around Southam. While most of the concrete built works structures have gone, the quarries have flooded and the spoil banks have become overgrown. The result is a distinctive lime rich landscape, sometimes so distinctive that nature reserves and SSSI's have been designated. This would not have happened without the intervention of industry in the natural landscape.

Sometimes however, the remains are on such a massive scale that they are a landscape before the intervention of nature. Prime examples may be found amongst the remains of extractive industry. To stand high in Dinorwic Quarry amongst the barren wilderness of broken rock and low cloud is to experience an altogether alien landscape. There is nothing else like it. It has a smell, sounds and sense of place all of its own.

The copper workings of Parys Mountain or the lead workings around Grassington Moor have that similar alien sense of place that is exciting. Industry has created something that is unique. Something that is worth conserving for future generations to experience. Reclamation may not be satisfactory, even if it is viable or necessary. One of the most melancholy places I know is the former Allt Ddu district of Dinorwic Quarry where the admittedly dangerous workings and tips have been replaced by carefully graded but artificial looking slopes of anaemic grass and struggling stands of silver birch. Planning has created a soulless environment. Safer, but not a replacement for the original, or a gradual return of the industrial landscape to nature.

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