WARWICKSHIRE Industrial Archaeology Society

WIAS

NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE EDITOR

First, I must offer an apology for the absence of the December 2007 meeting abstract from this Newsletter. Normally, Arthur Astrop ably undertakes the role of Meeting Secretary and provides a written abstract of each meeting for the Newsletter. Unfortunately, Arthur was unable to attend the December 2007 meeting and so no abstract is available for publication. If it is possible to provide an account of the meeting later, this will be done. I hope this does not inconvenience members unduly. Meanwhile, if there is another member who would like to act as an occasional Meetings Secretary, I would be delighted to hear from them.

To replace the meeting abstract, I have elected to use some extracts from the Warwickshire Steam Engine Society's newsletter *The Link-up*. These appear courtesy of Peter Coulls, one time Chairman of that Society and its newsletter editor. Whilst I appreciate that the material may be familiar to some members, I also hope it will be of interest to the wider Society membership and perhaps generate some comments that may be published in the future. Further similar material is available and will appear as space permits.

Another matter raised recently, and coincidentally, by Arthur Astrop, was the possibility of including illustrations in the Newsletter. This is something I have always hoped might become possible, especially given my personal interest in photographing industrial archaeology, and something that I raised in an editorial in September 2004. The reason I have not pursued the matter further is one of cost. Currently, the newsletter is photocopied to double-sided A3 from high quality A4 masters. This gives acceptable, if slightly variable, quality. However, photographs do not reproduce well using photocopying, so their use would mean having to publish the Newsletter by laser printing as a minimum standard. Whilst the software required to layout the publication, and to generate the required file type (pdf), is not a problem, Southam Office Supplies would charge £50.00 just to open the disc containing the file, before charging the cost of printing. This cost is typical, regardless of the company undertaking the printing. One hundred double-sided photocopies on A3, the current Newsletter print run, cost £22.00.

I have researched the cost of laser printers so the Society could be self sufficient in printing, but again the barrier is cost. A4 laser printers are considered home office technology, and A4 machines for black and white reproduction cost from as little £100.00. However, A3 laser printers are professional level reprographic equipment and consequently much more expensive, typically £1000.00 or more just for black and white printing.

There is also a time element to consider. Using illustrations of any type in the Newsletter would require some document redesign, which would to advantage be better undertaken in a more recent and mainstream software package than I use at the moment, e.g., MS Publisher. Additionally, the preparation of images for reproduction would be a further time consuming task, above the considerable time already taken up in producing a text only edition. Unfortunately, I do not at the moment have the time available for the necessary extra work, but would not rule out being able to do the work in the future, subject to the cost problems being overcome.

Perhaps, if there is a need for a higher quality Newsletter, there is a case for a team of two to be responsible for the production: one person to co-ordinate and edit copy and one to prepare images and layout the publication? I would welcome the views of members on this matter.

Mark Abbott

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Meeting Reports *by Arthur Astrop*

January 2008: Anna Stocks

Listing and Planning Issues for the Industrial Archaeologist

The need to preserve evidence of the 'past' cannot always assume it has the right to block progress in the present. Similarly, of course, neither has the needs of the 'present' the right to be insensitive to remains of the past. Finding a just and equitable balance between these two often conflicting forces is the delicate task of today's Planning Archaeologist.

Anna Stocks, who holds that exacting post with Warwickshire County Council, feared she might bore us with 'local and national planning laws and procedures'. She need not have worried. It quickly became clear that she was actively seeking the help and co-operation of archaeologists, professional and amateur, in our County and from that moment she had the meeting's attention.

Every planning application in Warwickshire these days not only goes before the relevant Planning Committee but is also automatically passed to Anna Stocks's Department as well. By simply tapping a grid reference of the proposed development into a computer, the relevant site is displayed on-screen, and all known (or suspected) items of archaeological interest (general or industrial) in the immediate area are shown at the same time. Such computerised data is, of course, largely the digitised equivalent of the multitudes of records once held only on paper and in voluminous files. And some items of obvious historical interest, such as monuments, abandoned quarries and what Anna called 'upstanding' structures, could hardly be missed.

But what of the archaeological evidence, some of relatively recent origin which, if not already overgrown, overwhelmed, or otherwise 'lost' to records, is in imminent danger of becoming so? Such evidence can often come only from the personal knowledge and memories of individuals, and it must not be lost to record. How long will it be, for example, before most if not all recollection of what once stood on the site of Ford's Foundry in Leamington has faded? Likewise Potterton's factory in Warwick? Or GEC Alstrom at Rugby, where Frank Whittle's early jet engines were run? Or the former car plants in Coventry? Anna touched a WIAS nerve when she showed shots of the Warwick Gas Works building, unaware (we suspect) that it is our logo. Fortunately digitised drawings of that site and of the remaining building, externally and internally, are on record, and judging from the decaying state of the frontage today it's just as well.

Other examples which Anna gave of her work included recording the remains of a WW2 anti-aircraft battery site at Fillongley, for which plans for erection of stables had been made; and the foundations of brick kilns in New St, Bedworth, uncovered and recorded before site development was allowed. The final part of Anna's talk covered the type of delicate negotiations which are frequently required to achieve a fair balance between the needs of the archaeologist to record, and sometimes to preserve, and the reasonable expectations of the developer to build anew and to serve the needs of the community.

In maintaining the balance between the two the maximum amount of evidence on the history of a given site must be available if a fair decision is to be arrived at. Societies such as WIAS can play a vital part in accumulating that evidence, Anna said, and she urged us to be ever mindful of that fact. She may be contacted by e-mail at annastocks@warwickshire.gov.uk, by 'phone on (01926) 412734, or by post at Warwickshire Museum Field Services, The Butts, Warwick CV34 4SS.

Society News

Programme.
The programme through to July 2008 is as follows:
April 10th
Mr. Michael Derby: *Coke Quakers and Charcoal*.
May 8th
Mr. Peter Leather: *Industrial Birmingham 1760-1840*
June 12th
Mr. John Burton: *Nineteenth Century Industry in the Bedworth Area*
July 10th
AGM and Chairman's Lecture

Subscriptions
Members are reminded that subscriptions for the 2007/2008 season are now overdue. The amount remains at £10.00 per person or couple and should be paid to Martin Green, acting Membership Secretary, or treasurer Richard Hartree. Please make cheques payable to Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society.

Speakers
The selection and booking of speakers is an ongoing and sometimes difficult task. Most come from member's personal recommendation and Martin Green would welcome any suggestions of speakers with an IA subject bias for future bookings.

Agricultural History

February 2008: Mr. Chris Holland

Forgotten Hero: Joseph Elkington Agricultural Pioneer

For many people, the name Elkington most readily calls to mind the electro-plating process widely used for domestic items, including cutlery. But that mid-19th century technology was the brain child of Birmingham-based George and Henry Elkington and it was the work of their largely forgotten 18th century ancestor Joseph Elkington which was the subject of Chris Holland's talk to our February meeting.

Joseph Elkington (1739-1806) is buried in Staffordshire, but there is a monument to him in the churchyard at Stretton-on-Dunsmore, for it was in that village, and in nearby Princethorpe, that the Elkington family settled and farmed. On the monument, which is to the memory of Joseph, his wife and 11 children, he is described as a 'pioneer of land drainage'. Not, as Chris Holland admitted, a description to set the pulses racing; nor does it do proper justice to the important contribution he made in his lifetime to increasing the efficiency of land use not just in Britain but world wide.

On his father's death, Joseph inherited his land and on one portion, known as Long Harol Pits, he wanted to run sheep. But the land, which sloped fairly steeply, was poorly drained and really unfit for that purpose. Joseph's first attempt to drain it by having a deep ditch dug along the spring line was not wholly successful. Accepting this as a challenge, Joseph had bore holes driven deeper in the ditch. Soon water was flowing freely, could be diverted by ditches to the edge of the field, and the sheep were installed. This first attempt at land drainage in fact set Joseph on a career which was to bring him a considerable reputation.

It was remarked of Joseph that he 'had an intuitive feel for how to control water', either diverting it from where it was unwelcome or bringing it to the service of man. He developed theories on the strata beneath land surface, and how they affected the flow of water. He could also, it was recorded, 'read' the topography of land, thereby knowing where best to dig ditches, and at what depths. Joseph's advice was soon in demand as water was increasingly used to drive early machinery, and it is believed his skills were also sought by eminent landscape gardeners, including 'Capability' Brown.

Joseph's method of controlling water, known as 'spring-line interception', was the latest step in a series of man's efforts to drain land, and at the time (when clay drainage pipes were rare and expensive), it proved to be the cheapest and the most effective. As his work developed so did his fame, and in 1797 a Mr John Johnstone wrote a treatise on Elkington's theory and practice in land drainage. At one point, the House of Commons even voted the sum of £1,000 'to be awarded to Mr Joseph Elkington to encourage him in his work'. There is some doubt, however, whether that money ever reached Joseph's pocket!

In due course, the mass manufacture of clay drainage pipes made the 'intuitive skills' of a man like Elkington no longer necessary, and by the end of the 19th century he was all but forgotten, save by those who erected the memorial in Stretton-on-Dunsmore churchyard.

To round-off Chris Holland's talk, WIAS member Trevor Daw displayed a number of items associated with the days when land drainage was predominantly a manual task, including special narrow-bladed spades (chads) and similar implements, an iron plate which could be strapped to a boot to protect its sole during heavy digging, and a variety of different types of hand-moulded clay drainage pipes.

www.warwickshireias.org

Members who have access to the Internet are reminded that the Society has a web site at www.warwickshireias.org. This is maintained by Peter Riley and is updated regularly, so is always worth checking to see what is new.

Amongst the content is an almost complete archive of Society Newsletters, which is updated, as each new edition is available to members. The majority of these are posted in pdf format, which means the pages on screen appear exactly as the printed edition and can be printed in the same style. All but the most recent Newsletters are out of print, so this is the ideal resource to consult if reference to a back copy is required or if a copy has been missed.

Newsletters also contain a quarterly meetings programme, so a check of the most recent Newsletter in the archive will reveal details of a forthcoming meeting. Also the home page always has details of the next meeting.

Another recent innovation is a photo gallery page, which contains a varied selection of Warwickshire IA related images. More are sought, so members who have digital images of local industrial archaeology are encouraged to seek advice about submitting them for inclusion from Peter Riley.

Local Steam Plant

Extracts from Warwickshire Steam Engine Society's Newsletter *The Link-Up*
Courtesy of Peter Coulls

The now defunct Warwickshire Steam Engine Society used to produce a regular newsletter known as *The Link-up*. The one time editor and Chairman, Peter Coulls thought some of the articles previously appearing in that newsletter may be of interest to WIAS members. These jottings were written in 1972 by the late Jim Durant, at a time when industrial steam was well in decline. The text remains unchanged, however where additional information is included, this appears in italics.

Assorted Steamery

Late March I must have had a dose of "Spring Fever" and decided to find out how much, if any, live steam was in use around Leamington Spa. I started by looking for smoking chimneys, found engines, managers were most helpful when approached, some results are listed below.

Leamington Pump Room & Baths.

Cochran Chieftan automatic oil fired boiler, 65 psi usually 100 psi used for heating. Weir pumps replaced approximately 4 years previously.

Leamington Spa Laundry, Hitchman Road.

Paxman Economic chain grate boiler on anthracite, 80-110 psi evaporating up to 8000 lbs per hour. One weir and one electric pump, both on HILO system. Ex GWR. engineer / stoker.

Heathcote Isolation Hospital.

Mercury automatic gas fired boiler 65 psi for laundry process and sterilizers. New in 1970 replacing coal fired boiler and weir pumps.

Warneford Hospital, Leamington Spa.

Three Danks Lancashire boilers, oil fired, fed by two weir pumps, electric pumps as stand by. Used for heating, laundry process and sterilizing. Enormous system of piping and calorifiers (heat exchangers). Steam condensed and returned to system.

Midland Counties Home for Incurables, Tachbrook Street.

Two Danks Lancashire boilers fed by two weir pumps, anthracite fired, chain grates. One set on and one on standby. Steam used for heating and laundry, shift system – one engineer / stoker Ex - GWR.

These were visited at about one per fortnight – further travels as and when gardening, car repairs, etc. permit.

Napton Brickworks.

Sale of surplus machinery, Saturday, May 20th. Included in this sale was a steam engine by Pelham of Walsall. This was on a 20ft. bed, so a bit large for the majority of would be preservationists. Mr. Morton of Blists Hill Museum was notified, it is not known whether he was able to save it or if the torch and hammer squad moved in.

Postscript: Tuesday, 13th June. The engine is unsold. The owner Mr. Sheasby put a reserve on of £1000! There are two boilers, one now converted to a storage tank. The engine was used until about fifteen years ago and drove all the machinery, including the clay tubs by chain, the conveyors and the crushing pan. The exhaust steam was used for drying the 'green' bricks. Nothing wasted here.

According to George Watkins the engine was built by J. Wilkes of Pelsall Foundry, near Walsall, c1885? It was a non-condensing horizontal single cylinder engine operating at 80 psi. He suggests that the works were started in 1885 by Nelson, Watson and Co. producing traditional bricks and tiles. The engine was well built and was overloaded for many years, needing little but running repairs.

Twenty six years on the site remains largely derelict, despite several attempts to develop it. Most recently, it has been the subject of a locally contentious planning application for a craft village. This sought permission for a number of detached houses with adjacent craft workshops, the idea being to attract a community of self employed crafts people. However, general local opinion was that this was an underhand attempt to develop a housing estate in an inappropriate location, and nothing seems to have come of the proposal.

Meanwhile, fragments of the sites industrial past remain evident, most notably the clay extraction quarry on Napton Hill, now a fishery, and the house style office building at the site entrance.

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