WARWICKSHIRE
Industrial Archaeology Society

WIAS

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NEWSLETTER

THIS ISSUE

FROM THE EDITOR

My editorial in the March 2008 edition of this Newsletter concerning possible changes to its format brought an unexpected number of offers of practical help. These included the offer of a second hand A3 laser printer at a very attractive price; so attractive as to be almost too good an opportunity to ignore. So thank you to all who came forward. Despite none of these offers having been taken up (yet) they were all very much appreciated.

However, after discussion by the Committee, it has been decided that the current format of the Newsletter continues to fulfil the perceived need it originally sought to address. That is to ensure all Society members are kept informed of the activities of the Society, whether or not they can attend meetings regularly, the intention being to ensure all members feel included by the Society. In addition there has developed a secondary publicity role for the publication, as a copy is sent to local institutions such as libraries and to the AIA.

The inclusion of photographs it was felt would do nothing to further these aims and might detract from them, as if the current four page layout were retained, images would reduce the space available for text and possibly compromise the meeting reports.

This does not mean that images will never appear in the Newsletter. If all goes to plan, this edition will be something of a milestone since it will be the first to contain an illustration; a diagram appending the report of the May meeting. Hopefully, similar illustrations will be possible in future editions, where appropriate and available, as the technology required to reproduce them is now quite straightforward. The inclusion of photographs is not entirely ruled out either. The option of printing these on a separate insert has been considered and will be employed should the need arise.

The one aspect of the Newsletter that might be reconsidered to advantage is the means of distribution. Until now, distribution has relied upon collection at the meeting following publication, with a copy being sent to those not at that meeting. Lately, this posting out of copies has not been particularly efficient, relying as it does on an accurate record of who has, or has not, picked up a copy from the meeting. This record is something that is difficult to maintain particularly if, as is increasingly common, I am unable to be at that meeting. Therefore, with each Newsletter also being posted on the Society web site, and Internet access becoming more commonplace amongst the Society membership, what might be the feelings of members be towards stopping the practice of posting copies to those unable to collect them? Does this represent a conflict with the main stated aim of publishing a Newsletter, namely that of making all members feel included in the activities of the Society?

Mark Abbott

PROGRAMME

Programme.
The programme through to December 2008 is as follows:

September 11th
Mr. Lawrence Ince: *Engine-Building at Boulton and Watt's Soho Works.*

October 9th
Mr. Michael Derby: *Coke Quakers and Charcoal.*

November 13th
Ms. Gillian Bardsley and Rev. Colin Corke: *Car-Making at Longbridge.*

December 11th
Mr. Malcolm Hancock: *The Rise and Fall of Rugby Radio Station.*

Subscriptions
Members are reminded that subscriptions for the new 2008/2009 season will become due from September 2008. The amount, subject to the outcome of the AGM, is likely to remain at £10.00 per person or couple and should be paid to Treasurer Richard Hartree. Please make cheques payable to Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society.

Meeting Reports *by Arthur Astrop*

March 2008: Mr. Tony Green and Mr. Steve Walker

Mapmaking: Past Present and Future

The advent of digitization combined with GPS brings the imminent possibility of 'a single national seamless database for maps *without edges or corners'*. As a result, no longer will the very place you want to visit be on the extreme edge of a map, meaning that you probably need to buy at least two sheets; or in a corner, when you may need to buy four!

So predicted Tony Green and Steve Walker, both of whom have many year's service with Ordnance Survey behind them, in a presentation which traced the highlights of that famous organization from its foundation in 1791 to the present day. In fact they looked a little beyond 2008, for while the OS's 'single seamless database' is within sight it is not quite here yet.

It was the threat of invasion by Napoleon which triggered the formation of Ordnance Survey and Green and Walker described the early methods of surveying, by triangulation, the use of chains for accurate linear measuring, and the first mechanical theodolites. One of those early instruments was in fact displayed by the speakers, a masterpiece of 19th century precision engineering, but totally dependent on graduated scales, verniers, and therefore on the acute eyesight and interpretive skill of its operator to produce accurate readings. The speakers compared this instrument with its 21st century counterpart by demonstrating a computerized laser device which provides the operator with digital readings of much higher accuracy almost instantaneously with an observation being taken.

Ordnance Survey originally had its headquarters in The Tower of London, but in 1841 a fire forced its removal elsewhere and it settled in Southampton. The 20th century, with its periods of war and peace, brought an unprecedented demand for maps from OS, not least for artillery purposes on the Western front in WW1. In the interwar period, OS grew substantially, employed hundreds of highly skilled cartographers as well as surveyors, and had its own extensive map-printing facilities. In the same period, in 1938 to be precise, OS 'went metric'.

A year later, with WW2, the services of OS were once more in constant demand by Britain's armed services, and remained so until 1945. It was during that war that OS's headquarters at Southampton were heavily bombed. The Service therefore removed to premises in Chessington, Surrey, were it remained until new buildings were ready for occupation, once again in Southampton. But it is modern technology in general, and digital technology in particular, which in the last 20 years or so has totally transformed the working practices of OS. Both those technologies have enabled massive relational data bases to be built which not only speed up map making but also allow so-called 'attributes' to be incorporated into maps. Moreover, such maps can now be displayed in various ways including 3-dimensionally, based on data gleaned from aerial photography.

Such attributes on maps provide the detailed and specialised data required by different users such as fire brigades, ambulance services, and the police etc. to be called up and displayed on screens, including Sat-Navs. Much of such highly detailed data is now also captured by OS through the use of simple portable 'targets', carried atop poles, which are recognised by GPS systems. The plotting of maps from digitised data is now also automatic, so that the number of cartographers used by OS is but a small fraction of that formerly required. On the other hand, the number of people needed for field work, and to deal with and manage such data, has to a large extent taken their places.

Bridges Under Threat

From the CPRE Warwickshire Annual Review 2007-8 comes news of the threat of demolition for two early railway bridges in North Warwickshire.

The two structures concerned are on the now freight only branch between Whitacre Junction and Kingsbury. They date from around 1838 and are built of local sandstone, to a classical design, and are rare examples of structures built at the end of the Georgian era, and the opening of the railway age. This line was once part of the Birmingham and Derby Junction Railway opened in 1839. Network Rail has sought to demolish and rebuild the bridges to allow high containers to reach the Birch Coppice Birmingham International Freight Terminal, and is apparently unaware that the structures are listed. Meanwhile, a local public meeting has passed a motion to oppose the demolition and North Warwickshire's planners have asked the railway management to reconsider the demolition proposal.

Roger Cragg hopes to take a look at the two bridges, and to investigate if any further similar structures still exist on the Stonebridge Railway, the now abandoned part of this route which took the B. & D. J. R. from Whitacre, to the London and Birmingham Railway at Hampton in Arden.

Mark Abbott (With thanks to Toby Cave)

Railway Preservation

April 2008: Mr. Roger Cragg
Operating a Preserved Railway

The first steam railway to be preserved in the UK by voluntary initiative was the Talyllyn line, which was saved from almost certain closure in 1951 following the death of its owner Sir Haydn Jones. Today, the total number of preserved railways in the UK is no fewer than 153, of which 61 are standard gauge, 36 narrow gauge, 51 associated with museum and steam centres, and five are tramways. And the number of preserved steam and diesel locomotives associated with these railways is no fewer than 2,569.

Preserved railways range at one extreme to those with only one loco, a mile or two of track and a turnover of just a few thousand pounds, to relative 'giants' with many locos, substantial rolling stock and turnovers running well into six figures or more. By the same token, the magnitude of the tasks involved in operating a preserved railway is equally diverse, although the problems faced by those running them are remarkably similar. Who better to give our Society an outline of what is actually involved in operating a preserved railway than WIAS member Roger Cragg, who for over 30 years has been intimately involved with the preservation and running of the Welshpool & Llanfair Light railway in Wales.

Roger started by looking first at the men and women involved in these ventures, both volunteers and paid staff. In the volunteer sector there are (a) the 'pioneers', who tend to move on when a line on which they have worked is 'back in action', and (b) those whose passion and interest is in the actual day-by-day running of a railway. And today, the lady volunteers are no longer content just to staff the tea rooms: they want to be on the footplate as well. Volunteers, of course, are the backbone of any preserved railway and are 'cheap', but being volunteers they cannot be coerced, whereas paid staff, Roger said, although far fewer in number, can at least be 'ordered' rather than 'asked'!

An important first step for any railway preservation society is the acquisition of the powers required to operate a public passenger service, and leasing or purchasing the freehold of the line is essential. For this purpose a Company is usually formed which holds the lease or freehold. There are advantages for a line to acquire charitable status, but a separate company must then be set up to look after the line's 'trading' activities, if profits (however small) are made.

Roger dealt with the various levels of staff needed to run a line, from drivers and firemen to signalmen, guards, maintenance engineers, track layers, booking clerks, refreshment and gift shop staff, and so on. A line offering a public service requires a timetable to be issued (and adhered to) and that implies complex rostering work for someone! A General Manager is also essential (usually a paid member of staff), and there is also a Deputy GM (often paid as well), who has responsibility for day-to-day operations and the running of the shops and tea rooms Another crucial appointment is the Track Supervisor, whose duties are self-evident.

Structured training programmes for locomotive staff and signalmen must be introduced and will represent a 'ladder of progress' for volunteers working in those areas of activity. In short, a preserved railway which offers a public service must eventually have a structure which is in effect a scaled-down version of that used by its bigger, more famous brothers.

Roger finished his talk on a lighter note, namely the need for most preserved railways to mount 'special events', including for example *Thomas the Tank Engine Days* and *Santa Specials*. These occasions, he observed, are usually loathed by the serious steam loco volunteers but, they have to admit (albeit through gritted teeth), they are very lucrative and often make a major contribution to a line's annual income.

Looking Back

Looking back…… Working Life

Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum have a collection of objects from local businesses in the 19th and early 20th centuries. But they tell only a part of the story and an appeal has been made for memories which will help to bring the collection up-to-date.

Vicki Slade, from the Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa, gave a short presentation to our May meeting on the project, which invites answers to such questions as: *What did you do for a living? How did you train for your job? What was your working day like? Did technology change your working life? Was your social life linked to your work?*

Vicki is especially interested in memories of 20th century working lives at Ford Foundry, Pottertons, Flavels, Automotive Products, Eagle Engineering, Cherry Orchard Brickworks, etc. But also, of course, in many other local businesses. So, have you any stories and memories about your working life you would like to share?

London Docks

May 2008: Mr. Martin Green

The London Docks

"I have seen the Mississippi. That is muddy water. I have seen the St Lawrence. That is crystal water. But the Thames is liquid history". John Burns 1858-1943.

The scheduled speaker for our May meeting was unfortunately indisposed by illness and Martin Green stepped in to take his place at a mere 24-hour notice. As members have come to expect from our Chairman, he did so not just with aplomb but with a splendidly detailed grasp of his subject. His topic, he announced apologetically, would perforce be merely a short history of London Docks, an area possibly unequalled as a source of industrial archaeology in the Capital. What followed, in fact, was a fascinating and detailed account of how London's docks, its associated warehouses, shipbuilding yards, and all the infrastructure required to support them, developed throughout the 19th century, reached its apogee in the early part of the 20th century, and sadly declined virtually to nothing from the 1960s onwards. The whole illustrated by photographs of the highest quality.

The West India dock was the first to be built on the Thames, in 1802, and the last was the George V, ultimately finished in1921. In the intervening years a maze of world-famous docks, including the three 'Royals' (Victoria, Albert and George V), St Katharine's, the East India, Millwall, Surrey and Tilbury docks, was developed along a relatively short stretch of the Thames, each striving to outdo its predecessors in design, facilities and efficiency. Many in fact comprised a pair of docks, side-by-side, one for imports and one for exports. The former, incidentally, was invariably larger than the latter, reflecting the fact that Britain had a balance of payments deficit long before it became a well-known modern political problem!

The accompanying illustration shows the layout of the London Docks as they were between the world wars. They employed thousands of workers, many on a 'casual' basis, and some of the dock owners made considerable fortunes. But the construction of some docks caused great hardship to those whose houses were demolished to make way for them. Building St Katherine's Dock alone, for example, is recorded as having 'displaced' no fewer than 11,300 east-London residents.

The early docks in the complex were known as 'Legal Quays', were governed by the Port of London, and all trade had to pass through them. As the complex developed, problems arising from congestion arose, as did the level of pilfering. The latter eventually became such a problem that 'enclosed' docks were required, encircled with brick walls 20 or 30 feet high, and even in some cases with moats. By the end of the inter-war years, London Docks were fully developed (pictured below), but were to prove appallingly vulnerable to air attack. Consequently they suffered cruelly in WW2, German bombers merely having to follow the course of the River Thames to find their targets.

There was a brief post-war revival but then London's Docks gradually went into terminal decline. Much of the area has now been bulldozed and redeveloped into extremely prestigious (and expensive) office and residential occupation, but some remnants of Dockland's most historic buildings, also a few cranes, still stand as symbols of past glories. There is also an excellent Dockland Museum which is worthy of many more visitors than it currently enjoys, and our Chairman strongly commended it for a visit.

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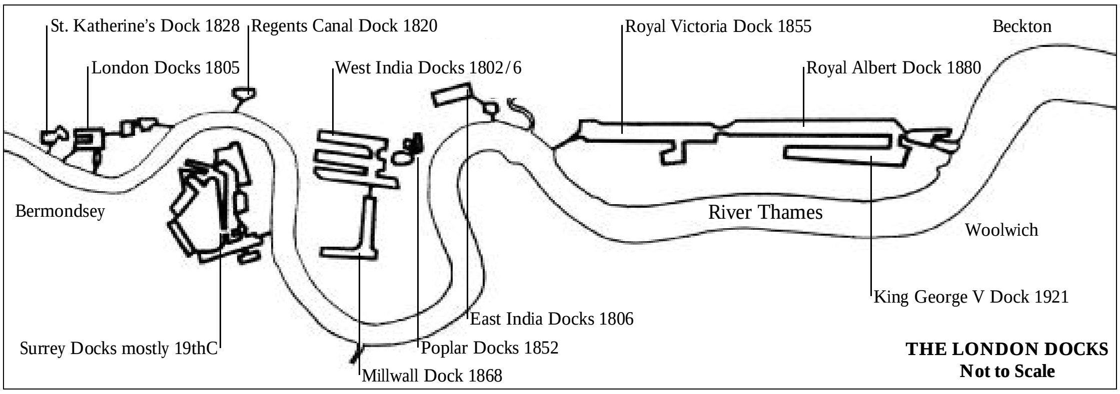

THE LONDON DOCKS
Not to Scale

Credits

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