WARWICKSHIRE Industrial Archaeology Society

WIAS

NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dealing with twentieth century sites is not an easy task for the industrial archaeologist, and it is perhaps apt that the seminar preceding this year's AIA Conference in Essex will be upon *'The Archaeological Approach to Twentieth Century Sites'*. Indeed, the recent experiences of two of Leamington's most familiar landmarks illustrate both the importance and difficulty of dealing with the industrial archaeology of the twentieth century. The Ford foundry and Leamington Spa railway station stood at opposite ends of a large site once occupied largely by manufacturing and rail-related activities, adjacent to the old Great Western route from Birmingham Snow Hill to London Paddington. The original station was re-built in the 1930s, and has now become one of Chiltern's landmark stations, with the efforts of many contributing to the renovation, re-equipping and landscaping of the station. The Railway Heritage Trust, The Friends of Leamington Station, Network Rail, Department for Transport and Chiltern Railways have all helped in the restoration, and a recent cleaning of the external stonework has revealed the station in much of its former glory. The renovations have added much to the pleasure of travelling from Leamington Spa – and not just for the industrial archaeologist.

By contrast, further down the Old Warwick Road, the historic Ford foundry – after years of gentle decay since closure in 2008 – has finally been demolished. This was one of the few remaining links with the motor industry in the town. The demolition has revealed the large extent of the site, (best viewed from the footbridge on Princes Drive). The tangled mass of ironwork and piles of concrete and brick rubble provide a sad end to this era of manufacturing on the site, but the closure had an inevitability about it, given the pace and pattern of change in car manufacturing in the UK and beyond. The difficulty for the industrial archaeologist is to identify the best way of recording sites of this type, where processes are involved and there is no possibility of converting to other uses.

Clearly, recording rather than any thoughts of preservation has been the priority. In this digital age, the (often illegal) activities of photographers keen to explore any derelict site mean that photographs of the site after closure - but before demolition - are readily viewable on the internet. Indeed, there seems to be quite a passion amongst intrepid trespassers for exploring derelict sites with camera in hand, and many such sites seem to be of an industrial nature.

Fortunately there is also the official version. A detailed photographic record of the Ford foundry buildings has been undertaken by the Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment and Archaeology Service under the direction of the Waterman Energy, Environment & Design. A copy of the final report will be submitted to, and made publicly available through, the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (WHER). To view the report once it has been submitted, please contact the WHER on 01926 412734 or e-mail historicenvironmentrecord@warwickshire.gov.uk. An on-line version of the WHER can be found at: http://timetrail.warwickshire.gov.uk/

In addition, the artistic eye of the professional photographers has also been applied to the Ford Foundry site. Ray Spence is a local photographer and lecturer in photography at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, Birmingham City University. His atmospheric studies of the Ford foundry site can be viewed on www.rayspence.co.uk

Both official and unofficial photographic recording at the time of closure is a starting point, but the nature of the processes utilised at the foundry and changes in those techniques over time merit careful recording. Oral history from workers with (hopefully long) memories of the site would be a starting point. There may be recollections and photographs from within the membership of WIAS that would add to this pool of information. The Society has had two site visits to my knowledge since 1989, and others may have visited on an individual basis. We hope in the course of the next series of meetings to have a presentation on the history of the site.

Finally, it is to be hoped that some permanent record of manufacturing on the site – something more imaginative, perhaps, than the familiar naming of a road or shopping mall - can be included in the public spaces of the new site.

PROGRAMME

March 8th 2012
Graham Fisher MBE:
Jewels on the Cut: Stourbridge Glass Industry & the Stourbridge Canal.

April 12th 2012
Sam Collenette, Archive Service Manager, Warwickshire County Record Office:
From Bolton to Warwick.

May 10th 2012
Derek Hurst:
Droitwich Salt Production: the technology.

June 14th 2012
Jeromy Hassell:
Coventry Machinists & Coventry Victor.

Meeting Reports

December 2011: Peter Lee
Nuneaton & Bedworth: coal, stone, clay and iron

Peter Lee's review of the now lost extractive and processing activities that once provided full employment for the men and women of Nuneaton and Bedworth was both depressing and heartening. As industrial archaeologists we have to recognise the inevitability of product lifecycles: the history of Coventry, for example, has been one of industrial reinvention over many centuries and it has provided us with much material for examination. We may mourn the passing of once great names but others do rise up to replace them. And is the demise of hard, dangerous and life-destroying manual labour not to be applauded? Providing, of course, that there is an adequate substitute put in place. If pit cottages and brickworks are replaced with new commuter housing estates and country parks is that necessarily a bad thing?

Nonetheless, the statistics with which Peter opened his talk were startling. The one-time boom town has lost some 40% of its jobs in the last ten years. For example, Sterling Metals employed 2,700 and is no more, there is only one working coal mine left in the district, the many mills that employed a high proportion of women have closed, and no bricks or tiles are being produced. Today, the largest employer is Dairy Crest with only 350 on the payroll. On the other hand, a dormitory town has emerged with landscaped parks and other amenities available to the community.

Nuneaton and Bedworth knew four principal industries based upon coal, stone, clay and iron. Of these, coal mining was the most important followed by brick and tile manufacturing and quarrying. All benefitted from being close to the canal network that was followed by the railways.

The liberally illustrated talk included many glimpses of these industries. Whilst the preponderance of illustrations being of steam locomotives was explained by the efforts of enthusiasts seeking out survivors for the record and that few photographs had been taken of the earlier activities, there was often much of interest and of valuable evidence in the backgrounds. Picture postcards from the turn of the 19th century provided another aspect of the district's main features.

Coal had been mined in the area since the 1500s. Coal seams were close to the surface and one inn even had its cellar carved out of the coal. Distribution was by canal barge and some estates such as Newdigate had their own canal system linking into the national network. Similar local networks were used subsequently for railways. Loading railway wagons needed expertise to ensure that the coal was not reduced to slack by undue movement during its journey and adopting dry stone walling techniques was one answer to the problem. The last shipment of coal to power stations took place in the 1960s.

Peter's research has revealed something of the personalities behind the local industries. E F Melly JP (a cousin of jazz musician George) was a philanthropist and mining engineer who was killed in the 1941 blitz. Alexander Donald, a Glasgow merchant and slave trader owned the Haunchwood colliery in the 1730s. Victoria colliery employed the future Labour Party Secretary, Thomas Mann, who was born in a cottage on Victoria Farm in 1856 and aged ten was a trapper at the colliery and worked there until its closure in 1870. W H Boon JP owned a granite quarry and was Chairman of the Rural District Council.

We saw too few illustrations of actual colliery workings except for some hair-raising examples of miners being lowered down the shaft in buckets and of the atrocious conditions that prevailed underground. Perhaps the best record found so far are the photographs commissioned by the owners of the Haunchwood colliery as evidence 'just in case' prior to nationalisation. Ironically, it seems that they made more money after nationalisation than before!

The roll-call of now forgotten collieries seemed endless; Bedworth, Charity, Collycroft, Coventry, Craven, Exhall, Griff, Grove, Haunchwood, Hawkesbury, Newdigate, Nuneaton, Oldbury, Stockingford, Swan Lane, Victoria and Wyken. Peter held the history of them all at his fingertips and most were the subject of an affectionate anecdote to go with a photograph of a now pensioned off or scrapped locomotive. Notable was his description of the white-knuckle ride down a 40^{o} slope into a drift mine and the not infrequent accidents on the rail network included a group of laden coal wagons that had run away down an incline to the canal wharf and overshot into the canal, discharging their loads of coal into the cut trapping several full barges for some time.

Closely associated with the collieries was brick-making. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, the area now known as the Borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth was riddled with coal workings and brick kilns. Wherever coal was found, good brick clay was found alongside. As the clay was dug through to reach the coal-seams, it made sense to construct kilns to produce bricks for the pithead buildings, and to sell the surplus to the local building trade. Throughout the area are the remains of old buildings long since demolished and in the frogs of the bricks scattered about are the words Durex, Hardy, Haunchwood, Moorwood and Stanley Brothers among others. Frequently, the brickworks and colliery bear the same name.

The district's brick and tile industry enjoyed a world-wide reputation for excellence. Stanley Bros had seven separate brickyards and specialised in glazed bricks for which there was a good export demand. The business lasted until 1988 when it closed and its records were acquired by the Nuneaton Civic Society, rescued by Peter Lee from the company's new owner who was about to scrap them. They are now on permanent loan to Warwickshire County Records Office.

Happily, examples of Stanley products survive in Nuneaton town centre; the former Gate Temperance Hotel was built by Reginald Stanley in 1895 and incorporates many of the yards' best products as does the Nuneaton Liberal Club and the Theatre and Gate Hotel.

Haunchwood Brick & Tile enjoyed the reputation of being the best in the country with its blue bricks being especially praised. James Knox, one of the directors also built a house to showcase the company's products; the Chase off Higham Lane in Nuneaton still stands today as the Chase Hotel.

The company's old no.1 brickyard is today the site of Whittleford Country Park, a local wildlife sanctuary. One illustration, without a loco in sight, showed three Haunchwood ladies in the 1960s operating a brick press line where operator safety seemed to be of little concern!

Much high quality granite was quarried in the district, W H Boon has been mentioned above and other quarries included Mancetter and Judkins who took over the old Boon quarry in 1955.

Some illustrations of the National Coal Board laboratories housed in the old Tansey needle works in Nuneaton showed another aspect of local industry.

Bedworth did possess some iron works but today nothing remains, and even machine tool manufacturers Clarksons has gone the way of earlier industries.

All in all, a most interesting evening that gave much food for thought.

January 2012: Christina Evans
Warwickshire Historic Environment Record and the 'Imaging Past & Present' project

Christina Evans opened many eyes to the work being done by a small team based in Warwick and part of the County Council's Museum Service. The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER) could play an increasingly important role in the future under proposed changes to the planning framework and potentially be of great interest and benefit to industrial archaeologists.

The HER is a record of all the known historic and archaeological sites and finds within the county. Its function is to maintain and enhance the record, to operate a public information service, to provide information to planning archaeologists, consultants and other interested parties and to promote local archaeology to the community. The HER team provides specialist archaeological advice and consists of the County archaeologist, who will be retiring at the end of March 2012 - and will not be replaced in the present climate - three people responsible for the historic environment record and a planning archaeologist.

Amongst the masses of information to be found at the HER are over 12,000 aerial photographs, historic and modern maps (including first and second edition OS), published and unpublished material (including local antiquarian and research groups and parish surveys), over 1,000 fieldwork reports often arising from development requirements, statutory designations, national and local journals and personal correspondence. Much of these data can be accessed through the Warwickshire Museum's 'Timetrail' website (www.warwickshire.gov.uk/timetrail).

This website has been designed to accept contributions from users and these are welcomed, especially photographs and descriptions of sites that are of historic and general interest. Visits, by appointment, are welcomed at the HER which is presently located with the Museum Field Services in The Butts, but the department is moving in the spring to Barrack Street in Warwick.

It was clear from Christina's presentation, and from subsequent questions and answers, that much of the future success of the HER as a force for the protection and preservation of the County's archaeological environment will depend upon input from outsiders. The present and likely levels of staffing are simply too small to do more than monitor the most prominent locations. An obvious example that could well overwhelm the existing resources is the impact of HS2 on Warwickshire. Whilst some sites of archaeological importance on the proposed route are known, there could be many minor, and especially industrial, ones, that need to be flagged up as early as possible. Clearly, WIAS could play an important role as an information provider, possibly co-ordinating input from members.

A number of publications is produced by the HER team, ranging from archaeological comics aimed at 7-11 year olds to the Local Studies Toolkit which was developed to provide guidance about how to undertake research into the history and heritage of the local area. It is specifically aimed at those who have little or no experience of undertaking personal research and who feel they need some support and advice. The toolkit was created with the help of a number of experts from the County including HER staff, Local Studies Librarians, and County Record Office archivists. Within the toolkit there is information on key primary and secondary sources, including a description of each, their main uses and where each is likely to be found. The toolkit also includes information sheets on the use of maps and care for historic documents and objects, as well as information on who to contact for further help and advice. The Local Studies Toolkit can be viewed at local libraries or via 'Timetrail'.

Another current project, led by the landscape archaeologist, is charting the development of Warwickshire's historic towns from the Roman period onwards. Externally funded, the project is due for completion in 2013. It seeks to show the development patterns, both social and industrial, in each town. In the case of Atherstone we saw how hat factories had been located on now covered streams and how the development of the Vero slipper works progressed over 100 plus years. It is likely that future similar projects will be of considerable interest to members of WIAS.

In the second half of her presentation Christina concentrated on the various ways that information could be provided by members of the public to the HER.

'Timetrail' has already been mentioned. It is complemented by the HER blog at http://warwickshireher.wordpress.com. where up to date information can be found on many issues. Currently, opinions are being sought on a new local history website for Warwickshire. Warwickshire County Council's Heritage and Cultural Services are compiling a bid for Heritage Lottery funding that includes a brand new local history website. Working in partnership with Warwickshire Local History Society, the website aims to be an online gateway that would enable organisations, groups and individuals to share their research and collections and to promote events. For more information visit http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/localhistorygateway. Local archaeological societies are also being encouraged to join the partnership.

Local lists are being compiled as a way for a local community and local authority to jointly decide what it is in their area that they would like recognised as a 'local heritage asset' and therefore worthy of some degree of protection in the planning process. These could include buildings, monuments, sites, places or landscapes which currently have no protection in the planning process (i.e. that are not Listed or Scheduled). Typically, structures, landscapes, sites and spaces associated with a significant period in an area's history – for example the remains of industrial or agricultural activities, key public buildings such as schools, pubs, railway stations (and their associated structures) or bridges. Also, buildings or sites associated with a major event in the area or a group of buildings and/or open spaces which are typical of a local area and help create the area's character – such as a cluster of buildings with a particularly interesting design, street plans or the relationship between a group of buildings and an area of open space, buildings linked to figures of local importance (which can include those identified by commemorative plaque schemes).

Another method of inputting information that could be of particular use to members is the Warwickshire HER Flickr Project. Using the well-established social media site this offers a swift and simple way of capitalising on the wealth of illustrative material and knowledge within the membership of WIAS. Some reservations were expressed at the 'user friendliness', or rather the lack of same with Flickr, but nevertheless there seemed to be a clear need for industrial archaeological sites to be better represented in the HER. Members can join through either a Google or Yahoo account at www.flickr.com/groups/warwickshireher.

A lively question and answer session indicated considerable interest in and enthusiasm for the project. The ramifications of HS2 have already been mentioned and other areas of concern included the need for a visual record of old buildings, and of those no longer existing, for better industrial archaeological records generally and for ensuring that planners and developers were fully informed as to what the community considered important.

A thought provoking evening admirably concluded by the Chairman's slightly irreverent review of the London Olympic site's outer fringes.

February 2012: John Bedington
Charlecote Mill

John Bedington, the tenant and miller at Charlecote Mill, gave us a rare insight into the joys and tribulations of real life industrial archaeology with his review of his tenure of this Warwickshire survivor.

The present mill is located on the river Avon between Charlecote and Hampton Lucy. Mills have been known here, or hereabouts, since the Domesday Book but differences over the exact parish boundary line mean that the early mill was in either or perhaps both parishes! It seems likely that the present mill is in a different location, albeit close by its earlier incarnations.

The earliest map in the County Record Office to show a mill on the present site at Charlecote is one by Fish of Warwick dated to 1736. Another record shows that in 1731, one John Osborne rented 74 acres adjacent to the mill from the widow of Stephen Lewis and there is another reference to repairs to a mill in 1732. It is thus possible that the mill is older. The 1791 map by Clarke of Evesham also shows a mill in the same location. John Bedington contends that both maps have the mill in the wrong orientation, it should be turned by 90^0.

Sadly, the Lucy family archive at Charlecote House suffered considerable destruction in the 1890s but fortunately two deeds relating to the mill have survived. The first from 1772 shows that a lease of 21 years was granted in 1753 to a John Osborne (seemingly a relative of the Osborne referred to above). The date of 1753 was found engraved under the head race by John Bedington during some maintenance work. The deed included a provision that the landlord 'keep the mill in tenantable repair'. It also refers to the 'fletchers'. Not arrow-making but an old Warwickshire word for a weir.

The second deed covered a lease to two other Osbornes, possibly sons, and allowed them to remove certain equipment which they had installed, including dressing machines and sack tackle, at the end of their tenure.

Turning to the present mill, it is possible to date it to at least 1806 from a carved inscription recording the installation of the bed stone (the lower mill stone) at that date. The general style of the buildings also confirms such an age. A further pointer is that all the timber used is elm when oak would have been more usual; we know that the great ship-building programmes for the Napoleonic wars demanded huge volumes of oak.

John Bedington considered that a possible reference connecting the mill to one of the great civil engineers (Rennie?) is unlikely to be true, not least because the structure is so old-fashioned in many of its characteristics.

Today, the mill is very much 'as built' except for the rear roof elevation which has been changed to accommodate raised walls. A possible explanation is the provision of additional storage space for flour or grain at a time of rapidly rising prices at the beginning of the 19th century. Extra supports for the floor are a further indication of increased floor loading. War profiteering is nothing new.

Turning to the flat-paddled undershot waterwheels, there is clear evidence of modifications made in the late 19th or early 20th century. Cast iron hubs by Bell & Horton of Stratford upon Avon mate the original hexagonal shaft to a radial-spoked waterwheel which retains the original rims and paddles but replaces the former cross-over spokes. The inefficiency of the undershot wheel concept was commented upon.

A review of some of the former millers at Charlecote produced some interesting anecdotes and nostalgic photographs. W Witherington left his name stencilled onto a wall and a beam whilst Samuel Gough's rent arrears are detailed in a surviving rent book which also showed his rent being halved to £44 per half year. The reason remains obscure but possibly linked to hard times following the introduction of reduction roller milling on an increasing scale. Traditional country mills did survive by milling animal feed but this work fell away when electricity came to farms and allowed small feed mills to be installed.

Harold Palmer ran several mills including Charlecote and from 1914 to 1929 brothers Oliver and Roland Baker who were remembered by a Mrs Gilbert (born in 1814) who lived in Avonford Cottage near to the mill. She had reminisced about milk and extra staff as well as collecting bran from the mill to feed her rabbits. In 1929 Newberry & Son took over the mill alongside their existing agricultural contracting business.

Amongst the old photographs were eel catchers on one of the weirs, a miller and his workers outside the mill, and a number of evocative views of the mill across the river.

Returning to the mill's history, in 1939 it seems that the estate refused to repair the waterwheels and there is evidence that the hammer mills were driven from a tractor power take-off. When John took over the mill in 1978 the internal shaft was still in place. The sack hoist was originally powered by the waterwheel and the tale was told of a miller who demanded that his labourer tied two sacks to the hoist and followed them upstairs with a third sack over his shoulder. There's productivity in a bygone age!

From 1959 the mill was unused until 1978 when John Bedington was approached by Sir Edmund Fairfax-Lucy with a view to putting it into working order again. John took on the lease and the repairs to such good effect that the mill was chosen by the BBC for a production of *The Mill on the Floss* which paid for much of the restoration work.

By 1989 there was the possibility of returning the mill to full time working. This needed negotiations with the various Public Health and Industrial Safety bodies; the early inspectors sucked their teeth and warned that 'the Boss' was unlikely to look favourably upon the project but in the event he proved to be very enthusiastic and supportive.

The mill is still grinding flour and just pays its way. Ten tons of grain is enough for five weeks production which now goes mainly to private individuals and a few specialist bakeries. An interesting development in recent times has been the milling of maize for some Asian supermarkets. It is very popular with the Punjabi community who rate it more highly than the imported flour.

In conclusion, John expressed his thanks to the many people who had helped him over the years, not least his own family. He hopes that there will be some young man who will be willing to take over the mill – perhaps another solicitor from Birmingham who hates offices and loves mills is waiting in the wings. There are other dangers, the proposal to canalise the Avon would destroy the mill's viability by raising the water level by nearly a metre. The outcome of the feasibility study is awaited with some trepidation.