WARWICKSHIRE Industrial Archaeology Society

WIAS

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 49 October 2013 **PUBLISHED QUARTERLY**

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The 25th. season of WIAS meetings began in September 2013, with a revised constitution, a healthy financial position and a thriving membership, all discussed fully at the Society's Annual General Meeting. Much has happened in those 25 years, and yet in some senses it 'seems only yesterday' that a group of 'younger men' gathered at St John's Museum, Warwick to launch the Society, with Toby Cave as Chairman and myself as Secretary, and an inaugural lecture from Barrie Trinder.

I thought it would be of interest to write down some of the industrial sites in Warwickshire and Coventry that had been lost in that time, and it will probably come as no surprise that the list was worryingly long. A presentation on these sites might be an appropriate inclusion on a Members' Evening. Fortunately, in some cases recording had taken place; in others the loss has been more serious. Many of us have photographs of these sites, and the increasing use of social media (e.g. blogs, facebook) has prompted the proliferation of oral memories of many of these buildings and their workings, but it did re-emphasise the continued need for recording by whatever means available.

Attendance at the AIA Conference in Dundee (recorded elsewhere in this Newsletter) added power to the argument. The gazetteers for these Conferences focus on what actually remains at the time of publication, and whilst those sites now built over by housing or retail developments are of interest to the industrial historian, the physical remains have been lost.

At the Conference, one delegate made the thought-provoking suggestion that industrial archaeology is about what happened inside industrial buildings, and the buildings themselves were of less importance. The retort to this is, of course, that we would dearly like the working parts of the site to remain for us to study, but it is often only the framework of the building that remains, and the ability of the industrial archaeologist to interpret the physical remains of these buildings is a fundamental component of his/her role.

This recording of industrial activity can be achieved using a variety of techniques, but the advent of digital photography and HD video on phones and cameras (at an acceptable cost) means that accurate recording has become accessible to the amateur enthusiast. Postings on Flickr and clips on YouTube (and elsewhere) have given new life to the recording of industrial activity.

We are all photographers now, but the skill of the professional photographer still adds much to the recording of industrial processes and their associated atmospheres. For our county, Ian Beesley's wonderfully evocative record of the Atherstone works of Vero & Everitt 'Warwickshire Hatters' is an outstanding example.

Water colours are, of course, another medium, and there are many examples of very fine water colour depictions of industrial scenes. Many of these – perhaps by the very nature of the medium used – tend to concentrate on industrial landscapes rather than the detail of buildings and technology. One modern exception is the wonderful work of Falcon D. Hildred, with a range of drawings from urban and industrial settings, including Coventry, recently on exhibition at Ironbridge. Equally impressive in their intimacy and detail in recording the processes of industrial activity, often prior to their disappearance, has been the work of Arthur Lockwood. The fact that his work has been in Birmingham and the Black Country has been, of course, an added bonus for us. What is perhaps unusual about his work is the way in which he seeks to record the processes of industrial activity, working inside factories and foundries and having the patience and skill to record these processes so effectively, from Acme Whistles to Webster and Horsfall's wire works. One example of his work - readily available on the internet – is the recording of the last days of the Crown Nail Company, Wolverhampton.

http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/museum/engineering/crownnailco.

He has also produced a wonderful new book, reviewed elsewhere in this Newsletter.

PROGRAMME

October 10 2013
Roger Cragg:
Managing the Civil Engineering Heritage.

November 14 2013
Barrie Trinder:
Pontcysyllte: its place in history.

December 12 2013
Alain Foote:
The History of British Thomson-Houston, Rugby.

January 9 2014
David Fry:
Industrial Coventry in old postcards.

February 13 2014
John Brace:
The Channel Tunnel Fires.

March 13 2014
John Frearson:
Jonathan Dumbleton Pinfold and the Brickmakers of Rugby.

April 10 2014
Malcolm Nixon:
A New Light on an Old Industry: the Industrial Archaeology of the Worcestershire Potter.

May 8 2014
Peter Perkins:
The rise and fall of the Northamptonshire boot and shoe industry.

June 12 2014
Members' Evening:
25 Years of WIAS. 1989 - 2014.

Meeting Reports

May 2013: Simon Buteux (Director: Birmingham Conservation Trust)
Newman Coffin Works, Birmingham.

Simon Buteux is the Director of The Birmingham Conservation Trust and a Research Fellow of Birmingham University but is also very much a hands-on field archaeologist who was involved with the excavations before the Bull Ring redevelopment and the restoration of the Reader's House in Ludlow. More recently, he spent a year with a charity school project in Borneo before returning to take up his present position with the Conservation Trust.

The Newman Brothers' Coffin Works in the Jewellery Quarter is but one of his responsibilities although, perhaps, one of the more interesting. Located in Fleet Street on the edge of the Quarter it is not only the last factory left on the street, it is a time capsule unchanged from when the doors closed for the last time in 1999 after 105 years of business leaving most of the machinery, furniture, stock, records and everything else in suspended animation. A Mercantile *'Marie Celeste'* gathering dust in its Grade II* listed mausoleum.

Victorian funerals were lavish affairs of conspicuous expenditure. Coffin fittings were an important element to a stylish and opulent departure and Newman Brothers operated at the top end of the trade. Some notable 'clients' reputedly included Joseph Chamberlain, Winston Churchill, Cardinal Basil Hume, Princess Diana and HM The Queen Mother.

Until the end of the 19th century the coffin trade was centred on London but then moved to Birmingham where the small metal parts that formed the bulk of the coffin furniture were readily available. Newman Bros never manufactured coffins but supplied all the fittings, furnishings and textile elements needed by the local coffin maker.

In 1892 Roger Harley produced plans for 'A New Manufactory' in Fleet Street for Newman Brothers, Brassfounders, of 102 Irving Street. The Newmans had seen a business opportunity. The Fleet Street site was formerly a set of back-to-backs which were demolished. The façade of the building onto Fleet Street today is unchanged from the original drawings although photographs of the inner courtyard show the shoddy 1960s rebuilding of the casting shop wing.

Simon's presentation cleverly combined the original elevation drawings with schematics to show the locations of the various sections of the manufactory in its final days. To these he added pictures of the interior 'as left' when the doors were closed for the last time.

Amongst these illustrations were some evocative drawings by a Dr Allen, the son of a former sales director, recording his memories of the factory when he was a teenager in the 1930s. Dr Allen had fond memories of the polishing shop where large diameter linen mops were driven by individual electric motors. Apparently one majestic lady, known as Diamond Lil, was wont to support the part to be polished in her cleavage! The imagination boggles.

At one end of the courtyard, underneath the toilets, was located a gas engine which drove the line shafting for the barrelling shop and other machinery. The cramped working conditions in the workshops were clearly evident from the illustrations. If the conditions for stamping and pressing were bad enough those in the electro-plating shop would terrify today's officialdom.

Conditions were somewhat better for the seamstresses on the top floor. The shroud room was a 'jolly place to work' producing the clothes you would be seen dead in. This section contained huge amounts of stock, robes and fancy trimmings, including shrouds in Birmingham City and Aston Villa colours. An attempt at diversification that failed, leaving plenty of surplus stock for any fans in need.

A hoist runs the full height of the building from the shroud room down through the warehouse to the post room on the ground floor. The warehouse remains stuffed with stock and is a treasure trove of Newman's products. The range was breath-taking and a 'one stop shop' that included embalming fluid.

Another most interesting archive is formed by the ledgers and catalogues found in the offices which, as with the factory, remain, as left, even to tins of soup and bottles of Gordon's orange gin and champagne in a cupboard.

Unsurprisingly, there were two entrances on Fleet Street to the manufactory, one double door for the workers which also gave access for transport into the courtyard, and one panelled door for office staff and clients. At its peak the business employed about 100 people.

Turning to the personalities in the company, one Alfred Newman, a brass founder, was the father of two sons, Horace (1885-1952) and George (1889-1944) the Newman Brothers. They were succeeded by John Kellett who rebuilt the product range and eventually sold the business to Joyce Green in 1976. Miss Green then ran the company until closing the doors in 1999.

What of the future? At present a team of volunteer guides, often in costume, entertain school parties and conduct 'twilight tours'; when candle-lit the Coffin Works can be very atmospheric. The works also provides a setting for art events such as the Tin Box Theatre Company's production of 'Stop the Clocks'.

The Coffin Works Restoration Project has a lengthy history. In 1998-9 an English Heritage survey of the Jewellery Quarter identified the importance of Newman Brothers' factory and in 2000 the Factory was listed Grade II*. In 2001 the Birmingham Conservation Trust (BCT) undertook a feasibility study commissioned by Birmingham City Council and The National Trust, and in 2003 Advantage West Midlands (AWM) bought the factory from Miss Green. Between 2006 and 2008 with funding from AWM and others BCT developed an ambitious scheme for the factory.

Then in 2008 recession struck. AWM withdrew funding when regional development agencies were wound up and BCT developed a revised, more modest scheme and applied for Heritage Lottery funding. In 2010, BCT bought the Coffin Works from AWM with funding from Birmingham City Council and English Heritage approved a grant for repairs. In 2011 the application for Heritage Lottery Funding of just under £1million was successful and the development of a scheme was put in hand together with grant applications for match funding. This was achieved in 2013 and Heritage Lottery Funding gave permission to start.

The BCT plans for the Coffin Works are comprehensive with multiple uses envisaged for the buildings. The front area and stamp room will become a heritage attraction. The South (1960s) rear ground floor is to be used for a collections store, a conservation workshop and meeting room. Top floor units will be available for commercial letting. The North (1894) rear buildings will house commercial units and BCT will move its office to the Coffin Works. Rent from the commercial units and ticket receipts from the heritage attraction will enable the Coffin Works to become financially self-sustaining in the long term. The approximate cost of the scheme (including activities) will be some £2 million. Construction work will last until April 2014 and the Heritage Attraction should open in July 2014 leading to a self-sustaining operation by 2017.

All in all an ambitious project that we wish well.

Members' Contributions

Peter Chater:
The Burton Dassett Quarries and Aerial Ropeway

The original owner of the Burton Dassett Quarries was Lord Willoughby de Broke of Compton Verney.

From 1895 the quarries were known as the Burton Dassett Iron Stone Company and from 1918-1921 as T&I Bradley and Sons Ltd.

The Quarries were opened intermittently from probably 1868. It is thought that the stone was conveyed at first by cart to Fenny Compton station.

The East and West Junction Railway was opened from Fenny Compton to Kineton in 1871, and to Stratford on Avon in 1873.

A ropeway was constructed in 1871 from the quarries to the Burton Dassett Sidings on the East & West Junction Railway. In 1895, under new ownership, the ropeway was rebuilt and much strengthened. Each bucket was capable of carrying a little over 3 cwts. The ropeway, powered by a steam engine, was a little over one mile long.

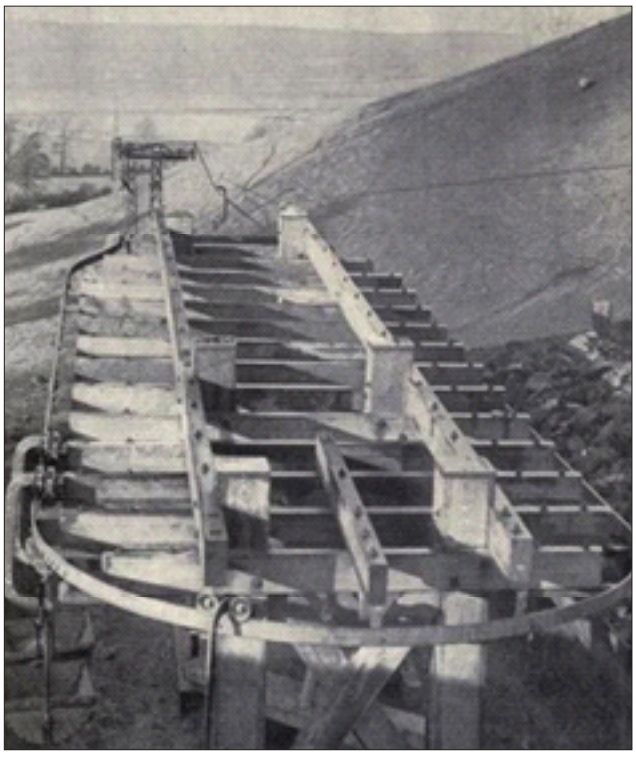
The railways in the quarries were of two foot gauge and the wagons were of the V-shaped tipping variety. Ponies were used to draw these wagons.

The head of the ropeway was at the western side of the quarries; the V-shaped wagons were brought to this point and their contents tipped onto a platform and then through a chute into the buckets.

The quarries were finally closed in 1921 and, when it became apparent that they would not be reopened, in 1929 the ropeway was dismantled as was the bridge which crossed the road between Little Dassett and Northend.

Much of the above information has been taken from Eric S. Tonks' *The Ironstone Railways and Tramways of the Midlands*.

The illustrations are from:
http://www.copsewood.org/aropeway/uk/rw_ukgaz.htm.



Top: Ropeway on the hillside west of the 'Beacon'.
Right upper: Bridge crossing the road between Little Dassett and Northend.
Right lower: The head of the Ropeway.

Members' Contributions

Richard Green:
Arthur Lockwood: Urban and Industrial Watercolours of Birmingham and the Black Country.

After his 'Change in the Midlands' publication in 2007, Arthur Lockwood has now produced a second, larger volume entitled 'Urban and Industrial Watercolours of Birmingham and the Black Country', and our Chairman asked his brother Richard Green (Honorary Secretary of the Birmingham Watercolour Society) to present a review of the book, published by Sansom & Co. £25.00, and to offer a broader perspective on Arthur Lockwood's work.

Arthur Lockwood's book *"Urban and Industrial Watercolours of Birmingham and the Black Country"* is a celebration of the talent and work of three generations of the Lockwood family, with paintings and sketches by Arthur's father Frank T, providing a context for Arthur's watercolours, and a few works by son Paul showing that the family traditions continue. We therefore can enjoy Frank's work in the 1920s and 30s, Arthur's early work at his father's side and in the 1940s and 1950s at College and as a graphic designer. Fortuitously, Arthur's timely return to the Midlands in the 1980s enabled him to produce a unique series of watercolours that now serve as a precious record of the decline and loss of the manufacturing activity that had been the lifeblood of Birmingham and the Black Country for more than a century, in a manner that gives real shape to our memory of those distant days. In complete contrast to Arthur's super-detailed and accurate representations of all he sees before him, Paul's work is fired by his creative imagination, and is more abstract than observed.

This is a beautifully produced, accessible book with the layout and print quality at the sort of high standard one would expect from an artist who studied graphic design and worked for much of his life as a designer, bringing to bear all his understanding of book layout and typographical structure. However, it is the technical skill shown in his use of pen and brush and the breadth of subject matter that make the book notable, working on many levels and enjoyable at every level. It is an attractive book to all, whether expert or novice, because it is simply so good to look at. It is a special historical record of industrial transformation and change that will help researchers understand the pace and process of change, and contains accomplished works of art which demand close study.

The book charts change, sometimes capturing an industrial scene that will soon disappear, or a set of buildings awaiting the hammer or in the middle of demolition. Many have a haunting quality, the structures being an echo of what was once there, an old friend about to be lost forever and suspended in time forever as an abandoned relic by the artist. Birmingham has seen many buildings disappear, some attractive, some an eyesore, but it is impossible to live in Birmingham or its Black Country neighbours and not witness the predicament of decision-makers as the old was swept away and the new was brought in. For good or ill, it has been an irrevocable transition as, for example, some of Birmingham's well-loved bedrock industries collapsed overnight, never to reappear, and the road-building so beloved in the 1960s dominated the change agenda. We therefore hold a debt of gratitude to Arthur and his father for appreciating what should be recorded and why.

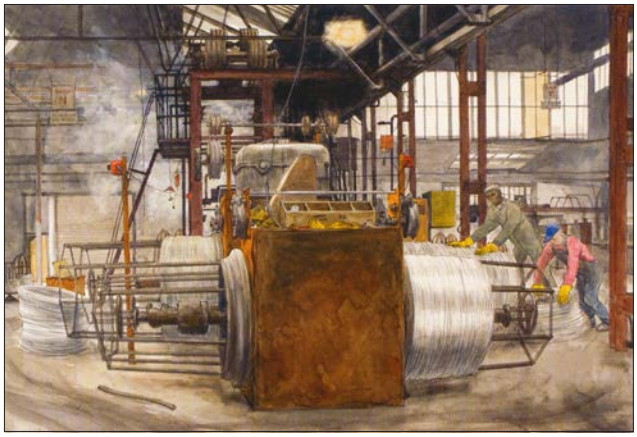
Arthur is not judgemental, nor is he a romanticist, at least not in his paintings as he seems more captivated by illustrating the real contribution played by a skilled workforce (*e.g. Smith Edge Tools of Oldbury: plates 302-304),* but equally does not ignore the grit and grime of the factory floor. He tells us how it is – or was. Nothing that Arthur portrays will ever return but there is no melancholy about his work. He simply - and with ease – captures the atmosphere of factories full of understated but industrious people hard at work, or buildings left exactly as they were when they were padlocked, or often just the empty shells that were left behind.

Arthur's paintings show a draughtsman's eye for perspective and he achieves compositions that draw the viewer right into the picture. Whether he is painting right up against the subject matter *(e.g. Canalside factories, Small Heath, Birmingham: plate 286),* or working inside buildings *(e.g. In the Henley Foundry, Smethwick: plates 243-246),* or capturing street scenes *(e.g. New Bond Street, Digbeth, Birmingham: plate 107),* he seems completely at one with the subject. Watercolour is an ideal medium for a 'light touch' and Arthur shows this skill when painting scenes that have a transitory nature or will soon be all that remains - as if they are just echoes of the past *(e.g. the Inn Place, Midland Street, Birmingham: plate 206).* By contrast many of his 'live' subjects – working foundries and forges etc – display the dark, muscular grittiness that working with metal and steel demands. What stands out in all his work –and his father's – is the attention to detail: the patina on the side of a drop forge, the discolouration on a skip. Not that Arthur slavishly paints every brick or corrugated iron sheet – he merely paints what is important to create an attractive picture and an appropriate record.

Little seems to have escaped Arthur's keen and reflective eye, whether it is comprehensive housing clearance, removal of modern structures or demolition in advance of the building of new industrial or commercial activity. He records some of the biggest schemes, such as that huge hole at the Bull Ring during redevelopment, but has rather greater empathy with more modest street scenes when seemingly overnight, buildings that had turned the corner of a street are no longer there.

For Arthur is a story-teller, a visual diarist of an ever-changing picture of urban change. Few of us can confidently predict where the next change will occur. But it surely will happen and hopefully others will follow Arthur's consummate skills of being there when it matters and being willing and able to record it.

The Inn Place, Midland Street, Birmingham: closed and boarded up, it was set on fire and demolished in 2001.



Webster & Horsfall Ltd., Hay Mills, Birmingham: hot dip galvanising for the application of a zinc coat to wire to prevent rust.

Acme Whistles, Birmingham: assembling the whistles prior to soldering the parts together.

Right:
Sidney Smith Castings, Stourbridge: the electric furnace, where molten metal is poured into the ladle or pot.

Coventry Colliery, Keresley: Number 1 head frame derelict and ready for demolition, June 1997.

September 2013: Martin Green

Association for Industrial Archaeology Conference 2013: Tayside (Dundee, Angus, The Mearns and North Fife)

For its fortieth Conference, the AIA ventured north of the border to Tayside, based at the University of Dundee. Four members of WIAS attended for most of the week-long Conference and our Chairman Martin Green produced this report for the September meeting.

The AIA Conference has become a focal point for AIA activities over the past four decades. It performs a range of functions, some associated with the AIA itself and its activities over the past year, whilst the majority of the time is spent learning about (via a series of lectures and shorter presentations) and exploring the industrial heritage of the surrounding area. The AGM, the Conference Dinner, the AIA Awards for various IA projects, and the Rolt Memorial Lecture – *'The Public Benefit of Industrial Heritage: Taking a Positive View'* by Miles Oglethorpe - were the main formal elements, but there were also opportunities to share time with fellow enthusiasts and to establish and renew friendships.

The Friday prior to the main conference is reserved for a seminar, and the theme for this year's presentations was 'Iron Structures'. The seminar was chaired by Professor John Hulme, a pivotal figure in the recording of Scotland's industrial archaeology, with an unrivalled collection of photographs taken in the 1960s and 1970s. A range of speakers (including Dr. David Mitchell, Director of Conservation, Historic Scotland) explored the history of particular structures in Scotland and beyond. This was followed by a fascinating presentation on the Tay Bridge Disaster from Professor Ian MacLeod, together with a description of the current restoration project for the bridge by Duncan Sooman of Network Rail. It was singularly appropriate that the afternoon trip was a walk beneath the current Tay Bridge, with the remnants of the piers of the doomed earlier bridge visible in the turbulent Forth of Tay beneath.

The conference gathered in the evening for a Tayside barbecue at Discovery Point, a visitor centre housing the Scott and Antarctica exhibition, with Scott's ship RRS Discovery (1901) moored at an adjacent quay. Scott had decided to have the Discovery built in Dundee because of the experience of the city with Arctic whaling and the qualities of the ships required for such expeditions. This emphasised to me the importance of landmark exhibits in attracting visitors to the industrial heritage of an area. Two other craft moored in Victoria Dock – HMS Unicorn (venue for the Conference dinner) and Lightship North Carr – were further attractions to bring people into the 're-generated' port of Dundee.

Another landmark attraction in the city is the Verdant Works which houses the jute museum of a city once dominated by production of goods derived from this brittle, imported fibre. Elsewhere the sheer scale of the mills devoted to production left a lasting impression, with the Camperdown Mills of the Cox Brothers in Lochee and the Tay Mills of Gilroy and Sons in the heart of Dundee representing two outstanding examples. Production was, of course, not confined to Dundee and the enormous Broadford works in Aberdeen represent a mammoth task for regeneration as an 'urban village'. Given the dominance of the jute industry, it is no surprise that many ancillary trades developed in the region, for example Pullars of Perth dyeworks; and Urquhart, Lindsay & Co., Blackness Foundry, Dundee, manufacturers of a huge range of specialist textile machinery.

Spending the week exploring the buildings of the jute industry, both in Dundee and beyond, reminded one that industrial archaeology is only one piece – albeit a very important piece – of the jigsaw of industrial history and heritage. The story of jute fascinated me, with so many aspects deserving further study, including the severity and social impact of the decline in the industry as a result of the (often Dundee-sponsored) rise of the Indian jute industry. Indeed, some of the most telling images at the Conference were pictures taken earlier this year by one of the AIA delegates Chris Emery of a jute mill in Kolkata (Calcutta). The atmosphere and conditions of the crowded factory – noise, heat, dust – were effectively conveyed through the visual image. Even more telling, perhaps, was the fact they were working with machines manufactured in Dundee.

Given the location on the north eastern coast of Scotland, maritime heritage would inevitably be an important element in Conference tours. Most dramatic of these was the visit to Aberdeen and the transformation of a once vibrant fishing port into one dedicated to serving the needs of the North Sea oil and gas industry. This was brought vividly home to us as we toured the harbour in our (Dinky toy) ferry beneath the bulk and sophistication of the vessels moored above. Other maritime elements were on a much smaller scale – for example the tide mill at Fife Ness and the saltpans at St. Morans. These two were excellent demonstrations of the benefits that dedicated, careful research (of both documentary evidence and physical remains) could produce in our knowledge, understanding and interpretation of an industrial site.

Jute, of course, was not the only textile produced in this part of Scotland, and there were many references to other textile sites. The Arkwright-influenced Stanley Mill – a range of water-powered cotton mills restored by Historic Scotland and the Prince's Regeneration Trust - reminded one of the image of the isolated textile mill, with mill village attached, reminiscent of New Lanark. Deanston Mill was another example, now converted to a whiskey distillery.

It would have been, of course, a crime to have departed Dundee without tasting malt whiskey, haggis and Dundee cake and marmalade. The first two were very evident – the latter less easy to find. Fundamental to the success of the Conference is always the energy and efficiency of the organisers, and it was a goal of this year's ebullient organiser Mark Watson that all should visit at least one distillery. Some delegates, I believe, managed three!

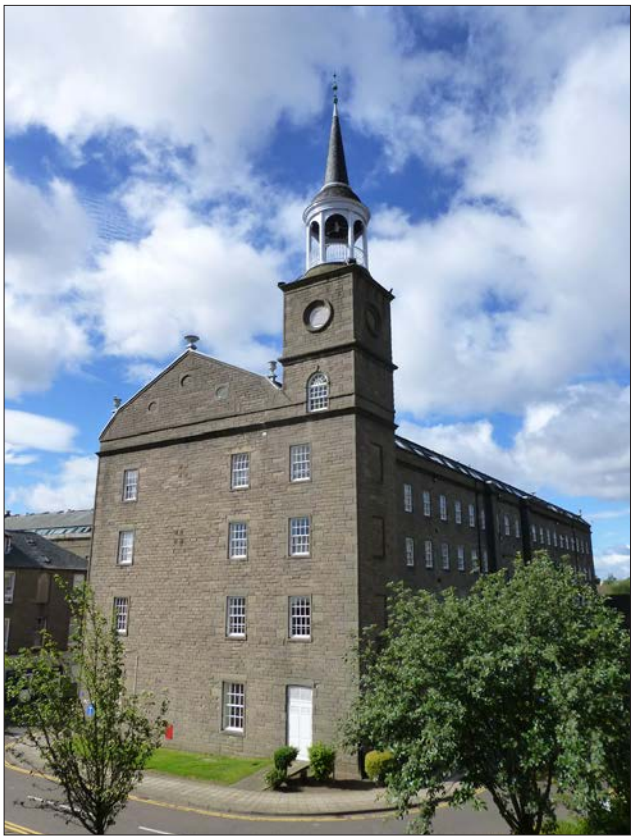
There are many reasons to return – the east coast rail route over the Tyne, Tweed, Forth and Tay bridges might be justification enough – particularly as Dundee seeks to raise its profile with the £45m project to build a V and A Museum adjacent to Discovery Point, and to bid for UK City of Culture 2017.

The second (1887) rail bridge over the river Tay seen from a vantage point above the city of Dundee.

The challenge of restoration to the enormous Broadford works in Aberdeen.

Cox's stack and the High Mill (1858-1868) of the Camperdown jute works of the Cox Brothers, Lochee.

Right:
The stills at Deanston Whiskey Distillery, a converted textile mill.



Part of the Baxter Brothers jute mills in the Dens area of Dundee, now converted to housing.

June 2013: Anthony Coulls:
Railways and the National Railways Museum of Sierra Leone

Anthony Coulls has given us several interesting talks in recent years but the history of the railway and the story of how a National Railway Museum was created and is being developed in one of the most deprived of sub-Saharan countries was both stimulating and heartening. However, whilst there was much to admire about the museum project the contrast that emerged between the early British colonial development of the railway system with its echoes of English gentility and the present ruthless exploitation of the country's mineral resources by the new colonial power, China, was revelatory and worrying.

Sierra Leone is rich in possibilities. Its capital, Freetown, lies on the largest deep water harbour in Africa, and there are rich deposits of iron ore, rutile (titanium), gold and especially diamonds. Despite this, two-thirds of the country's 4 million inhabitants survive as subsistence farmers and many of the 1 ½ million in Freetown are unemployed shanty dwellers. The country is still recovering from a vicious civil war that lasted from 1991 to 2002.

A soldier with a passionate interest in railways and museums is a little unusual. Colonel Steve Davies MBE is such a man. In 2004 he was Deputy Commander of the International Military Advisory Training Team (IMATT) in Sierra Leone. In his spare time, and with the help of a small band of unemployed but enthusiastic volunteers, he transformed a warehouse of decaying railway artefacts, including locomotives and carriages abandoned since the abolition of the State railway in 1974, into a new museum. He even paid wages from his own pocket. The Museum was officially opened in 2005 by the President of Sierra Leone.

Anthony's talk included many anecdotes relating to the trials and tribulations surrounding life in Sierra Leone generally and especially the acquisition of material for the museum. Getting around by road, by air or afloat required patience, initiative and hope for a successful outcome. Davies' military experience stood him in good stead on more than one occasion!

But to return to the history of the railway in Sierra Leone. In 1896 a 2' 6" gauge line was begun running from Freetown 270 miles up country to Pendemu. At Bauya Junction some 50 miles from Freetown, a branch line went to Makeni. A separate 3' 6" gauge line to serve the development of minerals, especially coal and iron ore extraction, went from Freetown to Marampa.

A contrasting series of pictures showed the original railway infrastructure and the few remnants that survive today. Notable were the spidery iron viaducts and their later concrete pillars, the English style buildings and a sense of order with later ruin. Today, only those parts fashioned from stone and concrete remain. Station signs being good examples. Anything of use for building has been liberated and reused.

The rail system began to contract in the 1960s, shortly after diesel locomotives had succeeded steam. First the section from Pendemu back to Bo (twinned with Leamington Spa) was closed and a decade later the line retreated to Bauya Junction and in 1974 back to Freetown. Much of the permanent way has now disappeared via the scrap merchants.

Short lengths of track have survived in and around the old railway workshops in the Cline Town area of Freetown where the museum is presently located. The workshops had remained open until the civil war when, it is said, at one time 30,000 people were living in and around them.

When Steve Davies first saw the workshops and surrounding area he was surprised to see what had survived. Not only a number of locomotives, both steam and diesel but important rolling stock including the original Governor's coach and one specially built for the visit of The Queen in 1961. Sadly, it seems that she did not in fact travel in it but it is being restored to its original condition. Also there were a number of passenger carriages remaining from the 30 sent out from England in 1961 to improve the railway. One problem with many of these items is the 'heritage insulation' they contain.

In February 2009 Anthony left a snowy England for his first visit to Sierra Leone, in fact his first flight and overseas journey, to review the material with Steve Davies and to begin the creation of the Sierra Leone National Railway Museum. It was indeed a leap into the deep end!

Fortunately, Steve had excellent contacts at the highest levels and Anthony found that he and the Anglophile President were both alumni of Aberystwyth University. Another plus was the work ethic of the Sierra Leoneans at the nascent museum; often unpaid but still prepared to come in and help.

Fortunately, funding has been found to allow the creation of an archive (there is much important and endangered material), a curator's office and other facilities. Repairs, especially to the decrepit tin roof, and the buildings is a priority issue.

A potentially useful source of future income is from the increasing number of cruise ships visiting Freetown who are being encouraged to show generosity.

The pictures of the restorations carried out so far demonstrated that the museum has plenty of potential attractions. This will be further enhanced if some track can be restored outside the museum buildings to allow proper steaming. There are also a number of diesel locos that can probably be restored to running condition.

Outside of the museum there is now little remaining of track or bridges. The ever present scrap dealer has taken advantage of booming metal prices and thus the chances of restoring the railway have been greatly reduced. Given the dreadful state of the road system this is unfortunate since a working railway could be of great benefit.

The museum is well received by a growing number of visitors and has featured on the local TV network. Its displays will be augmented with material no longer needed by the NRM at York and an oral history project has been started with so far half a dozen old employees recording their memories. It is hoped that there will be a growing number of international links to other railway museums.

Outside of the museum, the description of a trip up country to examine the refurbished 75 mile long section of line to the iron ore fields was notable. This work has been sponsored by China with Chinese labour, locos and rolling stock and is another example of a new colonial power seeking raw materials. The quality of the new track seemed marginal for its 3,000 ton ore trains and there is a clear need for education of the local population about the dangers of open crossings.

The presentation closed with a few examples of other industrial archaeology including a flat pack house sent from Harrods in 1912, the government wharf used by slavers and filmed in 'The Heart of the Matter', an ex-Isle of White hovercraft ferry from the 1970s and a bus emblazoned with 'Banbury United F.C. on its rear.