WARWICKSHIRE WIAS
Industrial Archaeology Society

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NEWSLETTER

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

THIRTY YEARS ON - WHERE NEXT FOR WIAS?

September 2018 marked the start of the thirtieth year in the existence of the Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society, and, as a follow-up to the AGM, and I felt it might be an appropriate occasion to offer a few thoughts on where the Society might go next.

At the AGM we were able to report a good year for WIAS, with membership and meeting attendances maintained, finances in good order (thanks to the prudent stewardship of treasurer Victor Lobb), plus the successful continuation of the other ingredients that make up the Society - website, database, newsletter and visits.

Thanks were delivered to all those concerned, together with those who act in a voluntary capacity at meetings running bookstalls and serving refreshments. The monthly meeting remains the essence of the Society, both in terms of talks given, but also as a means of contact between kindred spirits, and we are grateful to the membership (and visitors) who support these occasions.

Turning to prospects for the future, I felt it would be appropriate to reinforce some of the elements that contribute to the importance of the industrial heritage in a rapidly changing society. It plays a vital role in the formation of local, regional and national identities, and can be valuable as a source of economic potential, particularly in the creative re-use of industrial buildings. As a subject – as well as giving great pleasure to those who study it – it has the capacity to embrace professional experts and amateur enthusiasts alike, many of whom will have very different skills and experience, with community involvement a real possibility.

As examples of creative re-use, three sites *(see overleaf)* in the city of Wolverhampton were chosen – the conversion of the old GWR Low Level Station, the Chubb Lock-making premises, and the Springfield Brewery. This latter example is of particular interest as some of the remaining buildings are to be converted into premises for the University of Wolverhampton.

The pace of change – and the importance of recording – were illustrated by a brief history of the Websters-Hemmings brickworks *(see overleaf)* in Coventry. WIAS had organised a visit to the site several years ago, and WIAS member Jim Powell, who very sadly died recently, passed on to me some of the slides taken on that occasion. It was a pleasure to be able to show these slides, and it demonstrated how important such recording can be in view of the current conversion of the site to housing.

My interest in – and collection of – named Warwickshire bricks is the source of amusement amongst many, but it is the lasting physical remains of an extractive industry that was very significant in the county. Perhaps there should be a co-ordination of these brick samples from other sources, and a permanent display created – rather than lying in my cellar! Beyond this, there could be a case for the publishing of the research that was carried out by our first Chairman Lyndon Cave (and others) on the brickworks of Warwickshire. Much of the northern part of the county has been covered by Peter Lee and others, but what about the brickworks of the Warwick and Stratford districts and Coventry? Or, narrowing that down, to publish (website or booklet) on individual brickworks e.g. Webster-Hemmings.

So, the work of WIAS continues, but can new ventures be incorporated into the mix? Suggestions might be to work more closely with other groups and societies; to step over the boundary ropes and explore sites slightly further afield (e.g. Birmingham); to expand the interpretation of 'industrial' to include the service sector; and to add an architectural dimension to the recording of sites.

One example of working more closely with other groups has been the project with Leamington History group to record and publish a book on 'The Iron-founders of Royal Leamington Spa in the nineteenth century'. Michael Jeffs, Margaret Rushton, Peter Coulls and myself, ably assisted by the research of Richard King, have almost brought this project to fruition, with the book to be published in the spring of 2019. It has been very interesting to experience the different approaches of the two groups, but we hope the final outcome will be of interest to the membership of both groups and the wider public.

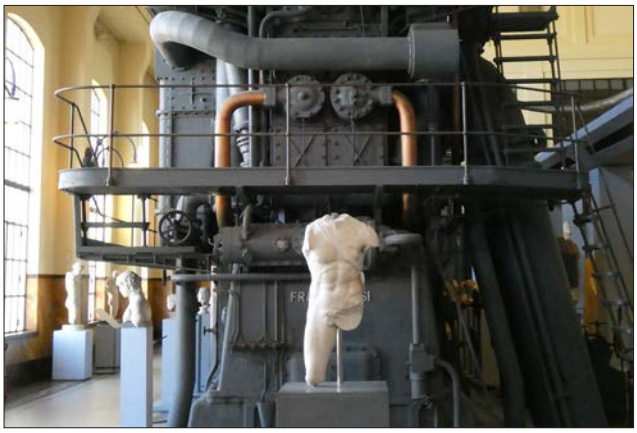
Turning to more controversial areas, might the service sector be incorporated in our studies? Pressure for this come from some of the changes in that sector, particularly the disappearance from the high street of the independent department store, the post office, and the bank. Many of these buildings are of interest architecturally as well, witness the brick and terracotta of the Old Bank (now HSBC) in Stratford upon Avon. No doubt, the steam-buffs and petrol-heads amongst us will recoil at the prospect of looking at such sites, but the thought is worthy of consideration!

PROGRAMME

10 January 2019:Members Evening:
Twenty's Plenty. Short Presentations, each lasting less than twenty minutes.
14 February 2019: David Fry
Forgotten Foleshill.
14 March 2019: Anthony Coulls
The Legacy of the Stockton and Darlington Railway.
11 April 2019: Peter Bolton
Stanley Mills, Perthshire: Textile Milling in Good and Bad Times.
9 May 2019: Rupert Fisher
Birmingham Jewellery Quarter:Real Jewellery for the World and his Wife.
13 June 2019: Chris Barney
The Redditch Needle Industry.

Meeting Reports

Former Chubb Lock and Safe Works, Wolverhampton

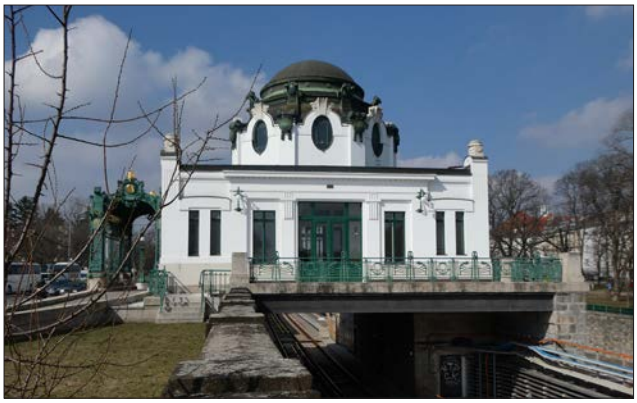


The meeting of classical and industrial archaeology at Museo Centrale Montemartini, Rome

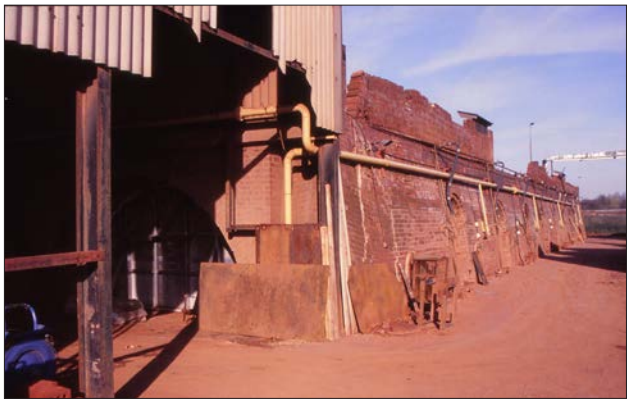
Former Springfield Brewery, Wolverhampton

Otto Wagner stations in Vienna: Karlsplatz

Former GWR Wolverhampton Low Level Station



Otto Wagner stations in Vienna: Hofpavilion Schönbrunn



Websters Brickworks, now demolished.
Photograph courtesy of Jim Powell.

Traditions continue at 'De Porceleyne Fles', Delft

November 2018: Martin Green and Alain Foote

Retention in Rome, Restoration in Vienna, Resilience in Delft and The Ferrybridge Centenary.

Unfortunately the planned November Meeting had to be cancelled because the speaker was ill, but the Chairman and Alain Foote stepped into the breach.

This slightly unusual title took us on a journey to three European cities, and an examination of how particular industrial sites had been treated in those cities. First on the agenda was Rome and the destiny of the redundant power station in Ostiense in the south of the city. In the early 1900s, there was a debate locally on the need for a publicly-owned power company to break the monopoly of the existing Anglo-Italian company. A public body was formed, the Azienda Elettrica Municipal (AEM), and a site was chosen between the river Tiber and the Via Ostiense. The site was outside the tax zone, had good transport links and a supply of water from the Tiber, and there was room for potential future expansion. It opened in 1912, with steam turbines as the primary source of power, with diesel engines added later. The plant eventually became obsolete and there followed a long debate about what should happen to this huge site, with a long campaign of RETENTION for the machinery. In 1997, the Musei Capitolini needed a home for sculptures during a re-fit, and it was decided to store them in the power station but as an exhibition 'Machines and the Gods', in the newly named Museo Centrale Montemartini This involved placing the sculptures and mosaics alongside the redundant machinery – a meeting of classical and industrial archaeology *(see opposite)*. The event was so successful it was decided to make it permanent. As a bonus, the oldest surviving rail carriages in Italy – those of Pope Pius IX – were added to the collection in the Museum.

It is very unusual to allocate the design of an entire rail transport system to one architect, but that was the responsibility accorded to Viennese architect Otto Wagner, one of the leaders of the 'Secessionist' movement in Vienna at the turn of the century. The Wiener Stadtbahn was developed 1894-1900, partly elevated, partly on street level, and partly underground. It covered 84 km., with 36 stations and 2 termini, with Wagner and his 70 assistants preparing 2000 drawings for the project. Parts of the system have been retained in the city's current underground rail system. There was a danger of some being lost, but a campaign of RESTORATION brought many elements back to their former glory. The Karlplatz station and the station built specifically for the use of Emperor Karl Joseph at Schönbrunn *(see opposite)* are outstanding examples, although the Emperor only used it once, preferring to travel by horse-drawn carriage to the Palace Schönbrunn. Both externally and internally, they are wonderful examples of successful restoration.

Visitors to Delft are likely to bombarded with potential opportunities to purchase the famous Delft Blue pottery from various retail outlets. What is probably less well known is the history of 'De Porceleyne Fles', its ability to survive huge fluctuations in the prosperity of the industry, and its capacity to develop many different styles and colours over the decades to sustain demand for its products. Founded in 1653, the firm has shown a remarkable RESILIENCE over this very long period of time. Fortunately, the history is recorded in an excellent exhibition at the pottery in Delft, which is combined with the opportunity to see current employees at work *(see opposite)*. In addition, a serving of Dutch apple cake on Blue Delft plates, with tea out of Delft Blue cups, make the perfect end to a visit on a cold winter's afternoon!

Alain Foote attended the recent celebrations for the centenary of the power station at Ferrybridge in Yorkshire. This large complex has had an interesting history, not always as its owners and operators would have wished as Alain's account made clear.

Ferrybridge is where the River Aire is crossed by the Great North Road on a bridge designated a Grade 1 ancient monument. Work on the power station started in 1918 with the purchase of land from the Marquess of Crewe. Construction began in 1924 and the two Brown Boveri 20MW turbo alternators, then the largest in the country, came into service in 1927.

Construction of the Phase 2 extension began in 1937 and came into operation in 1939. Its design followed the original with precautionary structural modifications against air raids. Capacity increased from 40 to 130 MW with two 42.5 MW English Electric turbo alternators built in Rugby. The new boiler house was twice the size of the original and increased coal demand to 330,000 tons a year.

A further 45 MW English Electric turbo alternator installed in 1950, together with additional boilers, increased site capacity to 170 MW. This was further extended in the late 1950s by 300 MW with the construction of Ferrybridge B and planning for a third, much larger plant.

Ferrybridge C, on-stream in 1966, with 2,000 MW was delayed by the collapse of three of its eight 375 ft cooling towers in November gales. A combination of factors was involved but essentially a serious underestimation of wind loadings in the initial design was to blame.

In 1976 Ferrybridge A, the original part, was closed; the turbines removed, and the buildings converted into offices, a training academy and a heavy engineering workshop for the overhaul of power generation equipment that operates to this day.

Ferrybridge B closed in 1992 and Ferrybridge C in 2016 after more than 200,000 hours of generation But a new chapter of renewable generation was already beginning at Ferrybridge.

In July 2015 Ferrybridge Multifuel began operation on the land to the west of the Ferrybridge C site. Multifuel Energy Limited (MEL) is a joint venture between SSE and Wheelabrator Technologies Inc.

The plant can generate around 68 MW of low carbon electricity using a range of fuel sources, including municipal solid waste, commercial and industrial waste and waste wood. The plant takes material from across Yorkshire and the wider region. Phase 2, a second similar plant is now under construction with a planned output of 90 MW.

Earlier this year SSE announced that it is planning to demolish the C station and build a new 2000 MW Combined Cycle Power Station on the site, Ferrybridge D.

Those 100 years have seen many changes at Ferrybridge but electricity generation on the site looks set to continue for some time to come.

October 2018: Robert Eyre
The Healey Project

Healey and Warwick are inseparable. Robert Eyre's comprehensive and informative presentation clearly showed that the important Warwick Healey Motor Company Archive is in good hands and will be a most valuable source of information for motor enthusiasts and industry historians in the future.

The use of source material throughout the presentation, and especially the reminiscences of former employees captured in the oral history project, showed again how important it is to preserve the material that allows a business to be understood by those who never knew it when it was active – and when all physical evidence of factory or workshop has been lost.

We can be doubly thankful that the Healey family wanted this archive to remain in Warwick and that it was possible to raise the necessary funds for its acquisition, in which WIAS played a small part.

Donald Healey was a Cornishman, who had a keen interest in things mechanical, especially cars and aeroplanes. He left school early to join the Sopwith Aeroplane Company where flight testing at Brooklands introduced him to fast and competitive motoring. In 1916 he joined the fledgling RFC as an air mechanic and soon gained his wings. In the Home Defence squadron, he fought zeppelins before a spell instructing. He was invalided out in 1917 after a forced landing whilst flying night bombers in France and finished the war checking aircraft components for the Air Ministry.

Returning to Cornwall he studied automobile engineering (by post and by opening a garage) and developed his interests in electronics and radio (by starting the Perranporth Radio Company making radio receivers).

His reputation as a competitive driver grew and he made important contacts in the developing motor industry. His early successes were in European rallies, most notably a win in the Monte Carlo Rally in 1931 with an Invicta, and also with Triumph and Riley cars.

In 1933 he sold the garage business and moved with his family to Warwickshire to join the Triumph Company, becoming technical director responsible for car designs including the Southern Cross and Dolomite 8.

At the start of WW2 Donald Healey was involved with aero engine carburettors at Triumph before moving to Humber for the development of armoured cars. It was at Humber that he met two key members of the future Healey Motor Company, Ben Bowden (chief body draughtsman) and Achille 'Sammy' Sampietro (previously a chassis designer at Talbot).

The three Healey sons all served with the forces during the war, John, the youngest with the RAF; Geoff, the eldest with the Army in the Middle East and Brian with the Navy, including the Arctic Convoys. Donald himself also served part-time with the Air Training Corps.

Post-war, and whilst still working at Humber, Healey, Bowden and Sampietro spent their weekends designing a small sports car. Healey's contacts with Riley produced the engine and the source of the prototype body. The chassis was built by Healey and Sampietro with occasional help from Geoff when on leave, allegedly using tools designed for cement mixers.

The first production car body was built by Westland Engineering of Hereford and known as the Healey 2.4 or Westland Roadster. Donald Healey left Humber in 1946 to form the Donald Healey Motor Company. Another wartime aircraft business, Elliotts of Reading built the saloon version of the car known as the Healey Elliott. These two cars were the main products until 1950 and examples are still running today.

The cement mixer anecdote is supported by the fact that Healey rented space from Benford Ltd (who made cement mixers) in the Cape area of Warwick. Later an ex-RAF hanger was acquired and the site developed into the Cape works where all the 'Warwick Healeys' were developed. Most of those buildings have now gone but an Austin Healey restoration business is, today, on the same site in Lock Lane.

The more sporting Healey Silverstone and a refined 4 seat saloon by Tickford replaced the earlier models and a search for a larger American engine to replace the Riley unit led to a chance meeting on a trans-Atlantic liner with the head of the Nash Kelvinator Corporation and the Nash Healey. Nash provided engines, a much-needed cash injection and access to the US market, where all the Nash Healeys went until the 1954 US recession ended their sales.

But by this time, Donald Healey and his team (strengthened by Gerry Coker as body engineer and Barry Bilbie as chassis designer) had their sights on a much more ambitious project. A faster, lighter and less expensive sports car powered by an Austin engine originally developed for that company's ill-fated A90 Atlantic convertible.

The Healey 100 (for 100 mph) with prototype bodywork by Tickford was first shown at the 1952 Motor Show. An instant success story, with the legendary deal struck in a day with Leonard Lord, the BMC chairman, to put the car into mass production that is now a part of motoring history. And a major export success story with over 80% of sales in the USA.

The subsequent history of the Austin Healeys through the muscular 100-six and 3000 is well known. Continuing export sales of the 'Big Healeys' (reaching 90% by the 1960s) were bolstered by an active competition programme, especially in the gruelling long-distance European rallies which brought fame to many drivers. Competitive activities over many years had also included high speed records at Bonneville which boosted the cars' image in the USA.

The Frog-eyed Sprites and later Spridgets launched in 1958 to meet the need for a smaller, lower cost fun sports car were much loved and enjoyed many competition successes.

In 1963 the Cape Road site was sold, and the Company moved management, sales and competition activities to the former cinema in Coten End, since demolished and now a retirement home. The demolition on 13 January 1988 strangely coincided with Donald Healey's death in Cornwall.

Whilst cars were Donald Healey's foremost interest the Company tried some diversification into sporting boats for water-skiing and experiments with wind power generation.

The upheavals in the British motor industry and US regulations ended production of Austin Healeys in 1968. An association with the main US distributor attempted to revive the brand with the Jensen Healey coincided with the 1973 oil crisis. This, plus labour problems coupled to component shortages and inflation led to closure in 1976.

The Healey archive at the CRO is now catalogued and can be found online within 'Warwickshire's Past Unlocked' on the WCRO website and any additional material or contributions to the oral history project will be welcomed.