

GSIA

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EDITORIAL

The millennium may have changed, and in some areas the change is very rapid, but in others matters continue much as before. In many ways this the case with industrial archaeology. There is still the necessity of recording sites and undertaking research, and commenting upon planning applications, but 'new technology' is being used ever more in Industrial Archaeology. So, Ray Wilson's paper on GSIA and the Internet is most appropriate. The article provides an interesting comment upon the uses and value of the Internet, and details of out own website.

On a more traditional theme is Stephen Mills' article on Millend Mill at Eastington. This chronicles not only the development and history of the mill but also comments upon its future. Re-use of empty industrial buildings is essential, but finding an appropriate use which manages to retain the most important features of the building's former uses can be difficult. How this building fares only time will tell.

A more definitely archaeological approach is to be found in Michael Pollington's article on Mills in the Inchbrook Valley. More work of an archaeological nature is in Tony Youles' article on Tramroad remains in the Forest of Dean. This work is at a preliminary stage but it does show that there is much still to be done and much still to be found. It also shows how circumstances which may seem remote from industrial archaeology can have an affect - the outbreak of foot and mouth disease was not only a disaster for the farmers concerned and for those with businesses in the areas affected, but it also, quite rightly, meant restrictions were imposed on researchers.

A lighter but important piece of work is Hugh Conway-Jones' article on Three Interesting Gloucestershire Signposts. From a personal point of view I was interested to note the occurrence of the name "Izod". The Family were later, in the 19th century, maltsters in Chipping Campden! Finally but certainly not least is Theo Stening's article on the Column at Selsley. It recalls the history of how one of the exhibits at the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations held in 1851 found its way to Gloucestershire.

The rest of the Journal includes the usual and interesting reports of the year's visit and some interesting book reviews.

My thanks go to all this year's contributors.

Amber Patrick

My thanks are due to Ray Wilson for assistance with the production of this year's Journal, and to Derrick and Judy Hall for their work in producing the index for 1990 to 1999. It is a tedious task even with "new technology" but one which is much appreciated.

The cover illustration is a trade token from Gloucester & Berkeley Canal Company.

GSIA SUMMER VISITS 2000

The 2000 visits programme was arranged by Frank Colls who has compiled this report.

Wednesday 15th March 2000

Visit to the Woodchester Piano Company

This was a second chance to see the piano works after an earlier Society visit in 1998. Numbers were again limited and 22 of us were shown round by Mr Freke and Mr Beckingham. We saw the various stages of case construction and surface finishing for the several models being produced. The stringing process onto the cast frames (from France) was then seen and then the final assembly. The complicated 'actions', made in Nottingham or more cheaply in the Czech Republic, were then fitted prior to final adjustment and tuning. The 1998 GSIA Journal covers more detail of the processes which are a mix of machine production for most of the case panels and specialised hand fitting for assembly and adjustment.

Finally, Mr Beckingham gave us a demonstration of some of the finished pianos in the showroom. The latest development was an electronic device made by Technics which can be built on to a normal acoustic piano to expand its functions. The piano can still be played normally but can also be played in the manner of a harpsichord, organ or grand piano at the turn of a switch. The advantage is that the player has the feel of a traditional keyboard but can emulate other instruments. The kit can be linked to a computer giving other facilities for teaching and recording. We had had a most interesting and enjoyable afternoon as well as the benefit of a short but entertaining musical finale. Before leaving for home we thanked our hosts for their time and effort on our behalf.

Sunday 9th April 2000

Afternoon Walk – Stroudwater Canal and Fromebridge Mill

About 35 members and guests assembled at Fromebridge Mill for a walk along the line of the Stroudwater Canal to Saul Junction, led by Ray Wilson and Stephen Mills. We commenced by going back down the new road to the A38, and then along the old lane which was the former access to the mill. Here we picked up the footpath to the west of the mill which gave us a good view of its eastern elevation, with its interesting mixture of stone, brick and slag blocks. Crossing the fields we eventually picked up the line of the former Stroudwater Canal. Here we were reminded of the earlier schemes of Richard Owen Cambridge and John Kemmett who used the nearby River Frome for their attempts at creating a navigation. We continued on to Whitminster Lock where the restoration of the lock appeared to have come to a halt for the time being. Next we looked at the site of Whitminster Mill.

As usual there was plenty of interest at Saul Junction where the line of the Stroudwater canal is crossed by the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal. Among other things, we looked at Junction Lock which was needed so that the two canals crossed at the same level, the boat building and repair yard of R W Davis and Son, and the Junction Bridge House. We noted the line of the earlier navigation behind the bridgekeepers house abandoned when the junction was created and the present overflow weir from the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal into the Frome

Our return journey commenced by retracing our steps but rather than cross the fields back to the mill we continued along the line of the Stroudwater to the A38 passing two fine pill-boxes

on the way. From here we took the new road back to the mill. All was not over because the party then split up for a short tours of the exterior of the building and a look at the preserved machinery in the “museum” and ground floor bar. The ‘museum’ contains three pairs of grinding stones together with various mill related artefacts. The meeting finished with a vote of thanks to our leaders and those who wished to adjourned to the bar for some well earned refreshment after the walk.

RW

Sunday 7th May 2000

Coach Trip to West Sussex and Hampshire

A full day of visits had been planned and 39 members and guests enjoyed a mainly dry day seeing sites at Shipley (south of Horsham), Coultershaw (south of Petworth), in Chichester, and at Bursledon (near Southampton). We were grateful to Ron Martin of the Sussex IA Society who had helped to plan the day and managed to be with us for most of it. Shipley Windmill, built in 1879, is the only working smock mill in Sussex and once belonged to the poet Hilaire Belloc. Now restored and in the hands of a Charitable Trust and with a local Friends group, it forms a distinctive landmark on the edge of Shipley, itself an attractive village with many interesting cottages. We were shown around the mill in small groups by David French and his colleagues, and we were impressed with the work that had obviously gone into restoring and maintaining the structure and its machinery.

On then to Coultershaw on the Western Rother, a mill site since the 13th century. The main attraction is the waterwheel-driven beam pump of 1782, one of only three identified in the country. The design involves converting the rotary motion of the wheel, via 3 cranks with vertical connecting rods, to the outer ends of three 12 foot beams. These rise and fall about a fixed pivot and the length of the beams means that the free outer ends move with a substantially straight line action. Vertical rods attached to the outermost ends of the beams operate three pump plungers. The object was to pump river water 178 feet up the hill to Petworth House, and the town, for domestic water supply, and it was in use until about 1960. SIAS worked on restoration from 1976. The site had many other items and photographs on display and we also saw remnants of the lock, a wharf and stables from the time the river was navigable (till 1888). Before leaving we expressed our gratitude to Michael Palmer and his colleagues for showing us the site and for providing picnic facilities by the lower mill pond.

Our next stop was the Chichester Canal and the Padwick swing bridge. Built in 1820 as Poyntz Bridge by C & H Tickell, Founders of Southampton, it had recently been restored to manual working order, again by SIAS. We were then back on the road heading towards Southampton and the Bursledon Brickworks, founded in 1897 and operational till 1974. Now in the hands of the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust, it is a developing conservation centre and museum covering all aspects of building materials and practices. Kevin Stubbs, the Director, gave us a very informative and enjoyable talk on the history of the site and of brick making, and of the efforts to conserve as much of the structure and machinery as possible. We then had a tour around the various plant areas seeing clay preparation mills and brick making machinery, drying sheds and kilns, and boiler plant. The ambitious plans for its development into a “Centre for the Conservation of the Built Environment” embrace a wide range of ideas - tourism, education, archives and research, craft skills and conservation work. The already comprehensive displays of brick and tile items, and other building components was too extensive to cover in the short time now available but this is a centre well worth returning to as it grows. Time demanded that we got on our way and we thanked Kevin and his colleagues for a short but superb visit before heading back to Gloucester.

Sunday 21st May 2000

Afternoon walk – Northern section of Bristol Coalfield

Ten members met up with Will Harris, GSIA member, to continue the exploration of sections of the Bristol Coalfield. As before, Will had planned a number of short walks linked by car journeys to cover a wider area. We started at Mayshill and visited the adit from Serridge Engine Pit which still drains into the Frome at Damsons Bridge. We then moved on to Ram Hill Colliery where there are the footings of a horse gin which wound coal from the shaft, the head of a dram road, and the footings of a later steam pumping engine (circa 1825-1865). We then visited New Engine Colliery (NB a different site from that of the same name visited last year at Cromhall) where some of the single storey workshops have been converted into “terraced” bungalows, and there is a recently identified horse gin. Winding ceased around 1885 but the site remained in use as a timber yard for Mays Hill Colliery until 1925. Nearby, beyond Bitterwell Lake (the colliery pond), we saw the engine shed where what appeared to be one end of an egg-ended boiler had been utilised as a water tank for the locomotive. We moved on to Church Farm Deep to see an engine house and slag heap (known as a batch in this area) and we were told about plans to consolidate these within the building of a surrounding housing estate. Finally we visited Brandy Bottom Colliery and other surviving sites around the clay pit of the former Shortwood Brick Works. It had been an interesting afternoon with favourable weather and we thanked Will for all his work before heading for home.

Sunday 18th June

Afternoon Walk – the Coombe Hill Canal

Frank Colls had volunteered to lead this walk on the understanding that assistance might be available from Tony Burton, a retired water engineer who had done some surveying of the levels of the canal and its water supply in 1997, and earlier. Your Visits Organiser was most pleased that Tony was available and we met up with 13 members and guests outside The Red Lion at Wainlode on an extremely hot afternoon. We first saw the remains of the entrance lock by the Severn, now severely derelict, before following the towpath line towards Coombe Hill. The canal was opened in 1796 as part of a coal supply route to Cheltenham, but was always in trouble because of the need to transfer loads to wagon haulage from the wharf at Coombe Hill. While it was modestly successful, it couldn't compete with the new tramroad from Gloucester (from 1811) and its trade dwindled, eventually closing in 1876. The rather flat terrain indicated that water supply had not been easy for the builders and we soon diverged from the towpath to follow a winding route aiming to meet up with the River Chelt, the main water source. We found a shallow depression which Tony assured us was the route and we made our way across several fields with the line of the culvert becoming clearer as we went on. Some small but neatly constructed bridges, and even a short aqueduct over the Leigh Brook, were passed and we eventually arrived at the take off point on the Chelt, where little evidence remains. It was a short distance back down by a riverside path to our starting point and some welcome refreshment at The Red Lion. We thanked Tony for his contribution to an interesting and very pleasant afternoon.

Tuesday 4th July

Afternoon visit to the Coleford Brick and Tile Company

We were grateful to Mr Evans of the Coleford Brick and Tile Company for allowing a group of us to visit in the company's working hours. Twenty of us met on a rather damp day at the

works near Cinderford. The company had been established in 1925 at Marians Brickworks between Coleford and Staunton, and a further factory was set up in 1935 on the present site (which had previously been used for brickmaking). The Coleford works were closed after the war and production is now based at Cinderford.

The carboniferous shale clay, taken in batches from the nearby quarry and stored on site, has low water absorption and a high crushing strength. It is mixed and rolled, using German built equipment installed around 1985, to de-aerate the clay and provide a consistent stock. Additives are used to give different colours. The bricks, to a number of patterns, are all hand moulded and Mr Evans saw this as the basis for the quality product being made. Batches are then made up for placing in the drying tunnel and the allowance for shrinkage is carefully controlled. Next comes the firing process and two kilns are available. In the first, the bricks are moved into position on trolleys (a shuttle kiln), and while one batch is being fired, the next batch can be set up on other trolleys. In the second, the bricks are stationary and the kiln moves over them (a moving hood kiln). Again, while one batch is being fired the next batch is set up on the base ready for the moving hood to be traversed over it. Both were mains gas-fired but in earlier years local coal was used. The air to gas ratio is controlled to give a reducing atmosphere and the firing temperature is 1070 degrees centigrade. Firing takes four days and the shuttle kiln has an up-draught flow and the moving hood kiln a down-draught flow. The mechanical ingenuity involved in the construction and operation of both types of kiln was especially impressive.

Finally we saw stocks of various types of finished bricks and Mr Evans pointed out a feature of hand moulding which imparts a slightly curved appearance to the brick face. When the brick is laid this should be oriented such that a smile is seen rather than a frown! A recent large order for Coleford bricks was for the new British Library in London and two and a half million bricks were supplied. We thanked Mr Evans for a most fascinating and enjoyable afternoon before heading for home.

Wednesday 19th July Town Tour and Social Evening at Tewkesbury

Over 30 members and guests assembled at Tewkesbury, just by the Abbey, for this walk led by our President, Amina Chatwin. After a brief introductory talk on the background to Tewkesbury's origins and development, we proceeded to look for the various remnants of the town's manufacturing history. Stocking making was an important trade and we saw buildings with large upper windows in St Mary's Lane which housed such work. A vital part of the industry was the construction and repair of stocking frames, these having hundreds of components, which allowed the trade to expand from cottage industry into larger houses and factories, although business declined from the mid 19th century. In the graveyard behind the Old Baptist Chapel we saw graves of a prominent stockinger and of a frame manufacturer. On to the Abbey Mill and the adjacent barn, both associated with the life and work of the Abbey (built from 1102). The mill, sited on the cut from the Avon to the Severn, had 4 wheels and 8 pairs of stones and has been subject to various rebuilding since its twelfth century beginnings. It is now a restaurant. The barn had been used for a number of manufacturing purposes, including tanning and malting.

We crossed over to the Ham and continued by the riverside path with Amina pointing out various places on the opposite bank where industries had arisen and flourished. The site of the Eagle Boot and Shoe factory and its wharf were seen. This was another major industry which even exported boots to Australia. Crossing back to the town side of the river we came to the

still operational Healings Mill built in 1865. Nearby were buildings of the Blizzard Colman Tewkesbury Brewery (reported in the GSIA Journal of 1980) and the offices of a brandy merchant, these being alongside the main quay for the town. We turned into the main street and saw the 15th century wool merchant's house (now a wine shop) which GSIA is attempting to mark with a plaque in conjunction with the local civic society. Our final stop was at a large building in East Street which started life as a lace factory in 1825 and became a steam powered hosiery factory in 1860. It is now converted for residential use.

We had covered a fair distance and had learnt a great deal about Tewkesbury's past so most members were pleased to take up the idea of refreshment at the Berkeley Arms. This dates from 1450 but we were pleased to be able to use a back room which had its origins as a 12th century barn. This had some interesting timbers and the information that it was once used as an abattoir did not interfere with the enjoyment of some excellent beer and convivial company. It only remained to thank Amina for providing us with a very interesting and informative walk.

Sunday 20th August

Afternoon Walk – Painswick Mills part 4 “The Far West”

About 20 members and guests took advantage of a fine afternoon to explore the mills and other features of the final section of the Painswick Stream and its tributaries in the company of Ray Wilson. This was the fourth annual walk looking at the very rich and varied industrial heritage of this area.

Once again we met in the Walkers Car Park in Old Golf Course Road. Our route took us initially into the village centre where we looked at Bank House in New Street which had originally been cloth workshops. We then made our way to Edge Lane and paused to look at more workshops, this time Zachariah Powell's factory at Hambutts. Following the lane we arrived at the site of Little's Mill which has been totally demolished. This was the first of several former cloth mills that we were to pass. Its location is now only identifiable by a dip in the ground. We crossed the field and took the footpath that led to Upper Dorey's Mill on the Washbrook Stream. This was a very large complex but the main mill had been demolished by 1900, The substantial workshops that remain are now a dwelling and Mr Tony Marden, the owner, kindly showed us round the site. Walking down the drive parallel to the Washbrook we passed the site of Lower Dorey's mill. The only clue to its existence is now some masonry in the bank of the stream. However there was much more to see at the next mill on the Washbrook.

This was known as The Little Mill and should not be confused with Little's Mill passed earlier. It was disused by 1903 and derelict in the 1960's. It has since been repaired and considerably extended to form a dwelling. It has been renamed Washbrook Mill. To add to the confusion in this area, the mill long known as Washbrook Mill has been renamed Washbrook Farm and is now a dwelling. It became a grist mill after being a cloth mill up to about 1828. It bears some interesting stone carvings visible from the footpath. The extensive former millpond is now completely filled in and grassed over. Crossing the A46 we dropped down to Kings Mill on the Painswick Stream which had the benefit of water from both the Painswick Stream and the Washbrook. We had looked at the mills on the main Painswick Stream on previous walks so this time we moved swiftly past Skinners Mill (believed never to have been a cloth mill), the site of Spring's Mill, Painswick (Mason's) Mill, Capp Mill and Brookhouse Mill where we began the long climb back up to the centre of the village. It was a further climb back to the cars but happily we had been invited to call in en-route to the garden

of John and Josephine Brazier where tea had been arranged. This was most welcome and we thanked them for their kind hospitality and our leader for the interesting final walk in the series.

RW

Sunday 24th September Coach Trip to Northamptonshire

38 members and guests congregated at Barnwood for the journey to Northamptonshire to see a variety of sites connected with the county's industrial past. The Irchester country park near Wellingborough was our first stop and here we met up with Geoffrey Starmer of the Northamptonshire IA Group who had been most helpful in suggesting ideas for the day as well as offering to guide us around some of the places. Irchester was one of several iron ore quarries in the county and, although little remains, we were shown the surviving earth features which demonstrated the process of ironstone extraction across an extensive area. This involved mechanical digging and back-filling to create a hill and dale formation still visible. We also saw the remains of a calcining clamp and indications of the course of the quarry railways. We walked across to a section of the park now occupied by the Irchester Narrow Gauge Railway Trust, who have a number of locomotives (1 metre gauge), various items of rolling stock and other displays and artefacts. Ray Kingston, the Trust Secretary, told us about the collection and restoration work which they undertake. Many of their locomotives have been operated on ironstone quarry railways around the Midlands but some have served other industries.

It was then back on the coach for the short journey to Hunsbury Hill, to the south west of Northampton. Here the Northamptonshire Ironstone Railway Trust has a large and varied collection of standard gauge stock and locomotives (some in need of much renovation), as well as general railway items. There is a large workshop and stock shed which includes a display area with many photographs and models depicting the history of the ironstone extraction processes. As we arrived at the site the rain intensified and our plans for al fresco picnics were rapidly revised! Their buffet car was available for teas and coffees, which were much appreciated, although even the short walk from the coach involved a severe drenching! There was much to see here and members managed to get around the outside exhibits despite the rain.

On then to the centre of Northampton and the City Museum for a look at one of the county's traditional industries, boot and shoe manufacture. We began with a most interesting talk from Sue Constable, Keeper of Boot and Shoe, who showed us a range of tools and implements used in hand production, as well talking about the development of the trade over the years. We then had the chance to see the very comprehensive collection of footwear on display, historic and more recent, as well as some of the machinery used in the industry. The trade has considerably declined in the area although there are still a few specialist manufacturers in the town. The weather was improving as we reboarded the coach for the short trip to Weedon for a brief look at the military depot with its canal arm off of the Grand Junction Canal. Here we were met by Mike Rumbold of the Weedon Bec History Society who told us about the history and development of the Royal Ordnance Depot built in the early 19th century with its own connection to the canal system. The portcullis gate is still to be seen but the link to the main canal is now blocked. The whole site is now in the hands of a property company and the surviving buildings (grade II listed) and canal basins will be incorporated in a mixed commercial and leisure development.

It was now time to move on to Braunston and our route took us northwards along the old Roman road, Watling Street, now the A5. This shares the narrow passage through the low

hills with the Grand Junction Canal, the London and Birmingham Railway, and the M1 Motorway, all of which could be glimpsed at intervals, reminding us of transport developments over the centuries. At Braunston we met up again with Geoffrey Starmer for the last stage of our day, a guided walk around the area of this important junction. The weather had improved and we much appreciated Geoffrey's commentary as we saw a number of historic canal side features and buildings, and the more recent marina developments. The original junction of the Oxford Canal with the Grand Junction Canal was seen and then the present junction about half a mile further on. Time was now pressing and we had to head for home but not before thanking Geoffrey for all his efforts in suggesting places to see and providing so much information on the whole itinerary, as well as showing us around at Irchester and Braunston.

Sunday 22nd October

Afternoon Walk in the Forest of Dean

Tram roads were the main theme for this walk, led by John Foley. The route was to cover the section of the Severn and Wye Railway (known as such but operating as a tram road) between Lydbrook and Mierystock (Mirystock is a modern spelling). Since a linear walk was planned a car shuttle was needed and this was facilitated by having an extra (but optional!) morning walk in the opposite direction. The morning walkers met at the Speculation colliery site and proceeded northwards partly on the tram road route but then diverting to take a more direct but uphill line through forest tracks to Vention where refreshments could be had at The Royal Spring. Some adjacent lime kilns gave IA legitimacy to this choice of stopping place and, after lunch, we had to proceed south along the line of the Bishops Wood branch of the tram road to meet the afternoon walkers. They were meeting at the riverside car park at Lower Lydbrook and their first task was to climb to the tram road level by a stepped path which originally gave access to passengers using Lower Lydbrook Station, closed in 1903. Just to the east was the line of a self-acting incline (now obliterated) which had enabled loads to be transferred down to a wharf on the River Wye. The incline traffic soon fell away after the opening of the Bishops Wood branch in 1814 and it went out of use in the 1850s.

The groups converged at the top of the incline (we had about 35 people) and enjoyed excellent views across the valley before heading south along the main tram road line. John explained the background to the tram road developments and how the route had been partially overtaken by later railway conversion, opened in August 1874. At one point, the tram road had taken a route around a rocky spur whereas the railway had needed a short rock tunnel, Cole's Rock tunnel, still solidly in existence, to avoid the sharper curve which the horse-drawn tram wagons could take. There were several branches, serving mines or quarries adjacent to the route, but these were not always obvious. The main tram road route had required two large loops to overcome the hilly terrain, one around the valley of the Greathough Brook to the east of the eventual railway route, and another around Barnedge Hill to the west. We managed to follow parts of these loops which were made redundant when the railway builders cut through the main ridge with the Mierystock tunnel. The cutting at the north end has been filled in but the southern portal is still to be seen.

Arriving at the car park at Speculation, it only remained to thank John for his efforts on our behalf before ensuring that those who needed to get back to their cars at Lydbrook were given lifts.