

GSIA and Newent Glassworks

by Steve Mills

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A few miles to the south of Newent, there was once a glasshouse producing various types of wares. This seems to have been in operation from the very late 1500s up to the mid-1600s. The first definite reference to a glasshouse came in 1598. But by around 1700, it had gone. Back in 1983, Herbert Penn wrote an article in the GSIA Journal (pages 3-16) entitled *Glassmaking in Gloucestershire*, which described some of the background to the site. There is further information in *Newent's Roman Past & The History of the Newent Glasshouse* by Donald Rydon Shovatt.

Their work was later complemented by extensive field walking and documentary research carried out by Jill Turnbull who lives in Edinburgh. Like many of us, she was 'locked-down' and spent time organizing information on a number of projects she had been involved with over the years. This included research into the Newent glasshouse. She had also gathered a collection of finds from the site that included both glass fragments and pottery shards from the pottery that later replaced the glasshouse. Jill is originally from Gloucestershire and is an expert on glassmaking. For the last 30 years, she has been researching and speaking on the subject. She obtained a PhD at Edinburgh University in 1999 and her thesis *The Scottish Glass Industry 1610-1750* was published by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 2001, followed by *From Goblets to Gaslights, the Scottish Glass Industry 1750-2006* in 2017.

Jill was anxious to find a home for her Newent collection and contacted GSIA to see if we would be interested. We felt that it would indeed be of interest to members as well as other outside researchers. There followed a period of consultation with various local organisations and individuals to find a suitable home for her collection. To cut a long story short, Jill's file of research notes etc. and her glass and pottery collection has now been gifted to the Dean Heritage Centre. I recently delivered the file and was pleased to hear that they had had several enquiries about the glasshouse during the past few years, so it seemed the right home for Jill's work - there were very pleased with the donation. A second (digital) copy of Jill's notes was also produced and this has been deposited in Gloucestershire Archives. So, Jill's material will now be available in two places, and hopefully that should make access easier for any future researchers.

Like many other organisations, GSIA has had to cancel most of its activities such as visits and lectures. However, it's gratifying that we have managed to continue at least some of our work in maintaining and promoting an interest in industrial archaeology, and have been able to help bring some of this interesting material back to Gloucestershire.

The entire process has stretched over several months, partially because The Dean Heritage Centre has been closed, for obvious reasons. However, it has now re-opened on a limited basis and is once again, welcoming visitors. They are currently open Thursday to Sunday, 10 am to 3 pm. The pandemic has hit the Centre hard, particularly as they don't receive any funding from local authorities etc. It's always a fascinating place to visit, and GSIA members will be made particularly welcome.



Some of Jill's collection gifted to the Dean Heritage Centre. Other material is held by the University of Sheffield