

Somerset Industrial Archaeology Society's 50th Anniversary

Westonzoyland Pumping Station Museum: 3rd September 2022

By John Berry

To mark 50 years since the founding of the Somerset Industrial Archaeology Society (SIAS), a celebratory event was held for members and guests on Saturday 3rd September 2022 at the 'Westonzoyland Pumping Station Museum'. The GSIA was invited to send representatives, and hence appointed Committee Member John Berry (JB) to the task (*JB's childhood and formative years were spent in central Somerset and consequently, he has an intimate knowledge of the area and its history*). The Museum is located on the eastern bank of the River Parratt, at OSGR ST3395-3282, 1.4 miles south-west of the village of Westonzoyland and 5 miles south of the town and port of Bridgwater.

The anniversary celebration was held in the Museum's new 'Light Railway Maintenance Shed' which had been suitably equipped with tables, chairs, exhibits and all the necessary audio-visual equipment needed for the event. After signing in, JB took his place among the many SIAS members and guests.

The meeting opened with a welcome speech by Mary Miles (Fig 1), followed by a toast, proposed and given by Peter Stanier. The celebration cake was then cut to the approval of all attendees. This was then followed by illustrated talks from SIAS President, Peter Daniel, and Ian Miles.



Fig 1. Mary Miles welcoming attendees to SIAS 50th anniversary celebration

Peter Daniel's talk put the start of SIAS, founded in 1972, into its national context and the key events that have since taken place. Peter then went on to talk about the origins and background of Industrial Archaeology, including methods of identifying, recording, preservation, and the development of IA societies in the UK.

Ian Miles' talk was concerned with the industries that were around in late 60s/early 70s, and the events that got him interested in IA (*the talk was of especial interest to JB as it brought back many memories of his time spent in Somerset exploring old industrial, sites, buildings, and machinery*).

The presentations comprised an abbreviation of talk notes prepared for a retrospective meeting that was held on 24th January 2022 - *these notes and this report, plus the 83 indexed images taken by JB during his visit to SIAS's 50th anniversary celebration has been recorded on a file for access by GSIA Members.*

The celebration was followed by a cream tea where attendees were free to mix and talk. Following this, attendees were able to look around the Pumping Station, (*which was not in steam on that occasion*) for which JB took full advantage, taking 83 images around the site.

For those involved in Industrial Archaeology, this Grade 2-star listed site is of particular interest as its pumphouse contains an 1861 Easton & Amos Steam Drainage Pump, the only working steam pump that remains in its original location on the Somerset Levels, an attendant Museum containing a splendid example of working machinery (several of which were built or had worked in Gloucestershire – Figures 3-5), and a 2 ft gauge railway, typical of the many that once worked on Somerset's levels and Polden hills.

Before leaving for home JB sought out the SIAS members in charge of the event and expressed his and the GSIA's appreciation and thanks.



Fig 2. Easton & Amos Steam Drainage Pump



Fig 3. Sissons experimental double-acting steam engine



**Fig 4. Single cylinder double-acting steam engine, G Waller & Sons, Phoenix Iron Works, Stroud.
Ex Poole gas works exhaustor plant**



Fig 5. Electricity generation plant. Ex Stroud Hospital