

GSIA



OLD BOB'S PUMPING ENGINE
NR. WIMBERRY BOTTOM.

JOURNAL 1979

Illustrations in the Journal.

The illustrations on page ii & 21 are from S.Y. Griffith "Historical Description of Cheltenham" 1826.

That on page 16 is from Nicholls "Forest of Dean" 1858.

Front Cover, original drawing by Patrick Lane.

GSIA

GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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Hon. Treasurer: Mr Peter Wollen, 19 Chatcombe Close, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham.
Hon. Secretary & Journal Editor: Miss Amina Chatwin, 6 & 7 Montpellier Street, Cheltenham.
News Sheet Editor: Mr Mike Pountney, 44 Longway Avenue, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham.

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The aims of the Society shall be to stimulate interest in, record, study and where appropriate, preserve items of industrial archaeology particularly in the county of Gloucestershire.

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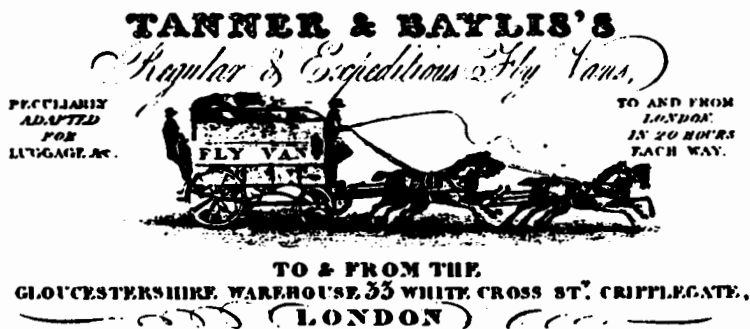
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EDITORIAL



Welcome to the Rev. W.V.Awdry as our new President- an old friend in a new guise - and surely our first President to appear in full colour on the front page of the Sunday Observer Supplement !

It was in 1971 that we introduced an Annual Journal in a format that has existed until now. As we approach the 1980s, almost a decade later, it is to be hoped that the present slightly streamlined version will prove an efficient vehicle for the publication of the work of our members, both derived from research and fieldwork. Most of the articles in past Journals have been provided by individual research projects; it is heartening now to see a wider spread emerging in this issue, including surveying, excavation and restoration. Eighty per cent or more of our members on enrolment say that they would like to take part in fieldwork; now is the chance for some of them to join in, as the small group currently working on excavation of the blast furnace site at Flaxley, would welcome additional help. (see News Sheet no 33; Contact Graham Curzon Gloucester 414844) Canal enthusiasts may be interested to hear, from David Bick, that there is the possibility that the Newent Town Council may restore a few hundred yards of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal, in conjunction with a plan to develop Newent Court Lake and grounds, as an amenity area, so here could be an opportunity for them to participate.

I cannot complete this editorial without mentioning the untimely death of David Morgan Rees OBE., Keeper of the Department of Industry at the National Museum of Wales, on 22 Sept. 1978. He was tireless in his work in establishing Industrial Archaeology in the Museum, and in bringing the Department into close contact with the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate and in a wide range of conservation work, including Elliot Colliery engine house, New Tredegar, Bryn Tail lead mine near Llanidloes, Dyfi Furnace in Dyfed, and the Blaenavon Ironworks. He has probably done more than anyone else in Wales to set Industrial Archaeology on a firm base. Morgan often addressed our Society in its early days, and was a good friend to many of our members.

Brian Smith, County Archivist, is shortly to leave the area to become Assistant Secretary to the Historic Manuscripts Commission in London. We shall all miss him, especially the many members who have enjoyed his evening classes at the Record Office over the years. He tells me, however, that he will not be giving up his home at Newent for some considerable time.

Amina Chatwin.

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF WESTERN INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

KEYNSHAM 1979

In 1970 the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society arranged the first regional conference at Bath. The event has been held ever since, hosted each year by a different Society; the meeting places being Cardiff, Cheltenham, Risca, Exeter, Worcester and Street. The first year set a pattern of relaxed informality which has prevailed ever since. This year the Conference was again organised by BIAS, this time at the Leisure Centre, Keynsham. A slightly more leisurely time table than has sometimes been the case, gave delegates more time to talk amongst themselves, and since the object of the exercise is liason between societies, this was all to the good. Displays and Publications were to be found in the Lecture Room, and since more and more societies seem to be producing more and more publications on I.A. this has become quite an important part of the proceedings.

It had been intended that Richard Keen, of the National Museum of Wales, should speak on the Museum and the work of David Morgan Rees, as a tribute to Morgan, who did so much for I.A. in the Western Area, and who was Chairman of the first Conference. Unfortunately illness prevented Mr Keen being with us, but Douglas Hague, of the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate, spoke of the late Morgan Rees, and his work as a Commissioner and Advisor for South Wales; of the thoroughness and willingness to work which made him a splendid commissioner, and of the kindness and sense of humour which will make us all remember him as a friend.

Douglas Hague then spoke, at short notice, on the state of I.A. affairs in Wales, and of the successes and failures in conservation. It has been possible to save the approach and one building in Pembroke Docks; work had been done at Scott's Pit, but undoubtedly the most impressive work now in hand was the restoration of the furnaces at Blaenavon. Failures included the destruction of the Holyhead Railway Station, and the levelling of the Hamstone engine house at Ma-stag.

He ended with a plea for realisation that concrete buildings could be of historical and architectural interest. It was odd to say the least that whereas silos on Wheelers Dock Cardiff, which were quite unsuitable for any alternative purpose, should be listed, an agricultural warehouse c 1902 on the riverside at Camarthen was not.

Russell Frears, of the Bath Industrial History Trust, gave a most interesting talk on The Bowler Collection and the Camden Works Museum. These are situated in Morford Street, not far from the Assembly Rooms, and provide visitors with a view of Bath very much in contrast to the Roman and Georgian aspects seen elsewhere. The Museum houses the entire stock-in-trade of J.B. Bowler; a late Victorian Brass Founder, General Engineer and Manufacturer of Aeriated Water, who set up business in 1872. During most of a century of trading virtually nothing was thrown away, so that visitors can see a unique collection of hand tools, lathes, bottles, machinery, fittings, correspondence, and personal effects. The value of the collection lies in its completeness, and constitutes a remarkable piece of local history. It exhibits also the amazing versatility of craftsmen of the period; when it is borne in mind that one man might make a wooden pattern, then go to the foundry section and melt the brass to make the casting, cast it, then go to the fettling department to finish the casting, and probably finish up by serving the customer with the product over the counter of the shop. It is said that when an inspector once pointed out a hole in the floor, J.B. Bowler replied "We expect people who work here to look where they are going."

Many Edwardian Trade Catalogues were found on the premises, some of which had never been taken out of their original wrappers, and formed valuable documentation in tracing the origin of many tools and pieces of equipment. The firm had issued coloured calendars over some ten years, and those unused were still rolled up in the attic - a real glimpse into a vanished past.

Commander J. Blake brought the audience up to date with the work in progress on the S.S. Great Britain. Many problems of decay had been solved, partly by the use of glass reinforced plastic, which had the advantage of retaining original but fragmentary parts in position. It is hoped that the diagonally laid decking, which contributed in part to the strength of the vessel, will be completed by 1980. The S.S. Great Britain is now looking very fine, with a Coat of Arms, a funnel erected, and a 25 hundredweight steel tube in use as the Mast; very much more complete than when GSIA last visited the Great Western Dock on Gas Ferry Road, Bristol.

Derek Warren of the Somerset Industrial Archaeology Society spoke on "The Parret Works at Martock", about George Parsons, flaxgrower and manufacturer. Carys Mill on the River Parret, formerly a snuff mill, was rebuilt and called The Parrot Works; an interesting group of buildings with a cast iron staircase, water wheels and flax and jute machinery. The company became public in 1855; a power loom shed was erected, a steam engine installed, and there was an imposing 70ft high chimney of Hamstone with brick lining. The Rope and Flax section of the business was finally divided from the engineering side and both firms continued working into the 1920s.

John Cornwell spoke at short notice on pits on the opposite side of the valley to Blaenavon. When the workings close down these pits will probably become the first mining museum where visitors can actually go underground. Mr Cornwell had been recording and photographing in Big Pit which goes back to 1800. Brick lined "roads" probably of c 1850 lead to the River Arch. Coal and ironstone were mined at

Engine Pitt level c 1800 where the masonry is also of remarkable quality; Mr Cornwells colour slides taken underground are always of particular interest.

The varied programme also included talks on "Houses of Totnes" by Michael Laithwaite, Exeter I.A. Group, and "The Albert Mill". Keynsham by Joan Day. As usual an incredibly well informed audience was present, leading to most interesting discussions at question times. Almost any area discussed in the talks produces members of the audience who have either worked in, or had connections with the places or officials, connected with every project or restoration mentioned. This Annual Day Conference is a most valuable interchange of ideas for all the Societies concerned. In 1980 it will be run in April by GSIA centering on the docks at Gloucester.

Amina Chatwin.

GSIA ANNUAL DINNER 1979

The GSIA held their Annual Dinner at The Fleece Hotel, Gloucester on Saturday March 30th. The Rev. W. Awdry, well known for his books, and general interest in Railways, made his first appearance as President of the Society. He introduced the speaker, Mr Norman Collins FRTPI, ARIBA, the County Planning Officer, who spoke on the County Structure Plan in relation to the preservation of industrial sites of historic importance. He spoke of his surprise and delight in first seeing Gloucester Docks and the mills of the Stroud Valley, which had galvanised him with enthusiasm for the preservation of such buildings.

He recalled Howard Pullan, until recently Civil Engineer & Surveyor of Gloucester, who had such a great interest in GSIA and who, together with Mr Collins, had done so much to preserve Telford's bridge at Over.

While taking a realistic view of preservation in the present economic position, he nevertheless looked forward hopefully, to a time when greater leisure for the people could be usefully employed in involvement with I.A. in a preservation context.

There was also so much that volunteer work could do in laying out I.A. trails, on the same lines as nature trails, which had become a feature of the countryside.

The Structure Plan had been most carefully evolved to include all interests, and it was vital that the GSIA should voice its opinions. Such a complex plan needed the participation of all interested parties to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

Mr Norman Ferry, Chairman of the GSIA, thanked Mr. Collins, saying how much he found himself in sympathy with the views expressed which were very much those that had often been put forward in Committee.

Amina Chatwin.

VISITS

A full programme of day and half day visits was arranged for the Summer of 1979 by Dr. Ray Wilson. We are extremely grateful to him for all the work he put into the task, and also to those members who supported him by leading some of the visits. Editor.

Full day Visits. The first, at the end of April was to Bury Port and the Gwendraeth Valley, led by an old friend and honorary member of the society - Mr Ray Bowen. This area is particularly rich in industrial archaeology and as we moved from the Docks at Bury Port up to the head of the valley all interests must surely have been catered for.

GLIAS member Mr Michael Bussell was our guide on the trip to London in May. At Kew Bridge Pumping Station we had the rare treat of seeing some of the beam engines (including the 90") started up. Lunch was at St. Katherines Docks, and we continued with a tour through Londons now sadly derelict dockland. The final stop was at Southwark where we walked round the facinating area near Clink Street with its narrow streets and 19th century warehouses.

Our June visit was certainly a day for our "Great Western" enthusiasts. A large party were given a most comprehensive tour of British Rails Swindon Works. At lunch time the opportunity was taken by some members to visit the Swindon Railway Museum or to simply explore the Railway Village. In the afternoon a visit was paid to the Didcot Railway Centre where we were able to see the working collection of Great Western steam locomotives, passenger coaches and goods wagon.

In July one of our members Mr Harry Townley led a visit to the Birmingham Canal Navigations. This time using the coach rather than a boat we were able to visit many of the remaining major features of the BCN and learn something of the history of this facinating canal system.

Our last visit of 1979 was led by member Mr Graham Harvey to Bridgwater and West Somerset. After visiting sites in Bridgwater including the glass cone and the docks we moved on to Watchett to see the harbour. In the afternoon a visit was paid to Williton Station on the West Somerset Railway and the day concluded with a visit to the Weston Zoyland pumping Station on the River Parrett where a small group is currently restoring the 100 year old engine.

Half Day Visits. In May a large party of members and friends attended the Newent walk led by Mr David Bick. After an interesting tour, tea was taken at Pound House, and £31 raised for the Whitcliffe Furnace Fund.

A walk round Uley, Owlpen and to the mill sites along the delightful Uley valley was led by Mr and Mrs Gunston and Mr David Evans in June.

In July a successful coffee morning was held at Sutton's Mill, Cranham, by kind invitaion of Mr and Mrs G.N.Myatt; in the afternoon, Miss Barbara Snell led a walk along the valley where members were able to explore the sites of the old mills.

In August, Mr Neville Crawford led a walk along the Thames and Severn Canal from Chalford to the Daneway portal of the Sapperton Tunnel.

Finally there were two short visits ; Mr David Lyall arranged for a small party to visit Cheltenham Telephone Exchange to see the equipment installed in 1926 and now only just obsolete. Mr Michael Pountney was our guide to the remains of the quarries, inclines and railways of Leckhampton Hill.

As ever the organisers are grateful for the support from members and are always interested to receive suggestions for future activities.

Ray Wilson.

(We should also be glad if regular participants of the trips, would offer to make a report, on at least one visit during the season, for the Journal. This would spread the load and prevent all the reporting work falling on one person. Editor)