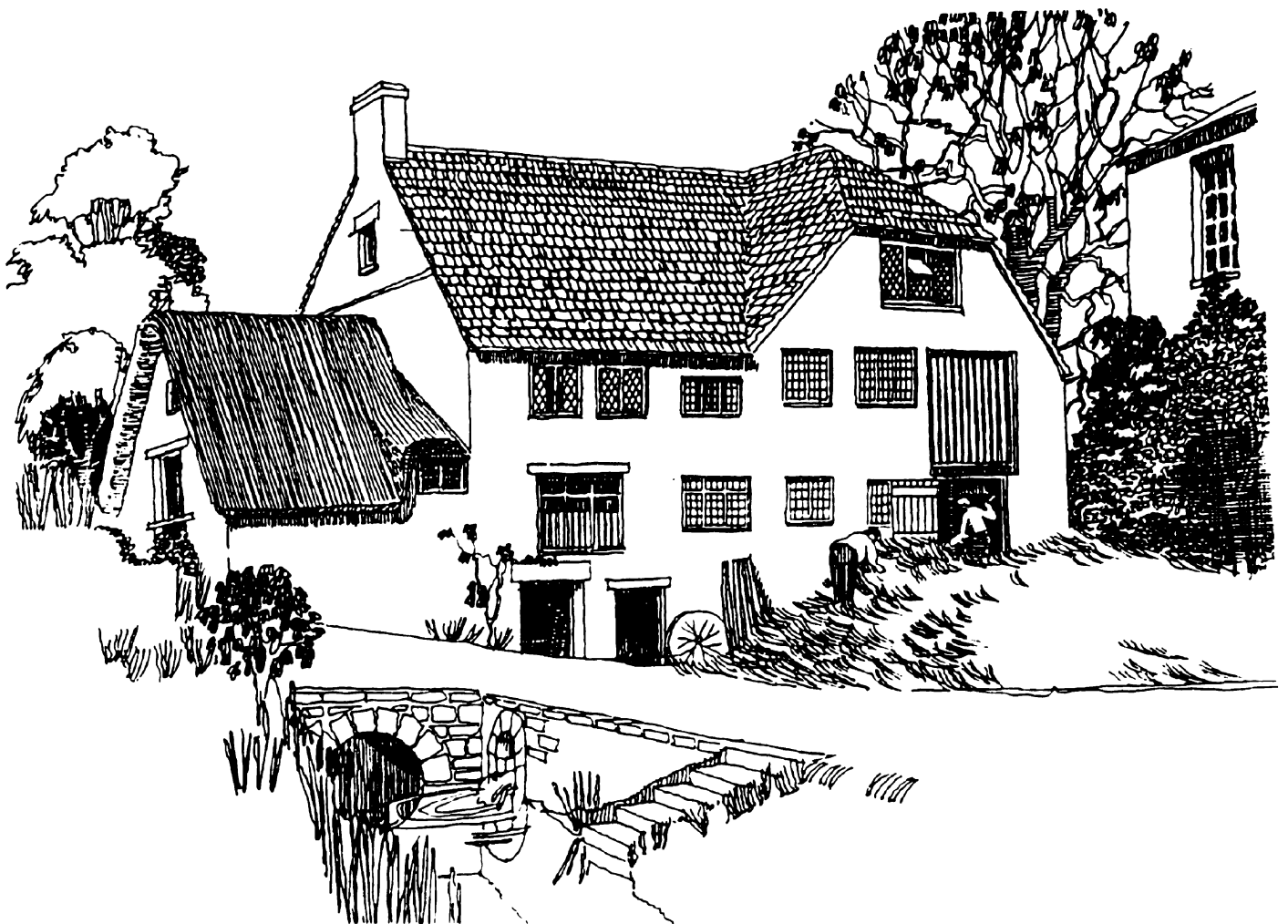


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Journal for 2003

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This year's cover illustration shows Malvern Mill, Blockley in 1890. A reconstruction by the late Ronald A Smeeton, ARIBA. (see article on page 10 - illustration courtesy of Jeremy Bourne).

EDITORIAL

This year it is a pleasure to welcome several new contributors to the GSIA Journal which contains articles on a wide range of topics relating to Gloucestershire's rich industrial past.

Pat Morris reports on her research into the introduction of the tin-plate industry to the Lower Wye Valley and the Newerne Valley of the Forest of Dean. Jeremy Bourne has provided the history of his house, Malvern Mill, Blockley, which like so many of the mills in the village it was once used in Blockley's silk industry. Derek Hurst is with the Worcestershire County Historic Environment and Archaeology Service and has provided a summary of the *Cotswold Sheepwashes Project* that was set up by the Cotswolds Area of Natural Beauty. The article gives a list of the relevant sites in Gloucestershire together with brief details of their construction and location. In 2002, the Society was pleased to support the founding of the South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group. David Hardwick and Roger Gosling of the Group have written an account of its first two years which have been very successful.

Turning to our 'regular' contributors we must start with Nigel Spry who contributed a major article on the Northgate Turnpike to the first GSIA Journal as long ago as 1971. In recent years he has mustered a large number of fieldworkers to carry out a survey of the use of slag blocks in buildings and other structures in the parishes near to the River Severn and in certain parts of the Forest of Dean. He has now collated the results of the survey which are presented here together with a discussion of the likely sources of the blocks both from the Bristol area and nearer at hand in the Forest of Dean.

Tony Youles has continued his investigations in the Forest of Dean and is focussing at present on *The Delves*. This is an area of unrecorded early coal mining which should afford Members with plenty of opportunities for field work.

The Editor has collaborated with Rob Jones, the Honorary Secretary of *British Horse Tram Enthusiasts* to provide an account of the horse tram system in Gloucester that revolutionised public transport in the city when the horse trams were introduced in 1879. The article also looks at the history and importance of the surviving Gloucester horse tram and puts the case for the completion of its restoration and considers the possibilities for putting it back on public display.

On a more topical note, Theo Stening has provided a third report on the progress of the Cotswold Canals Restoration. It includes details of the recent £11.3 million award made by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Hugh Conway-Jones tells us how an incident in a Gloucester corn mill in 1853 led to a court case which set a legal precedent which is often referred to today and has been studied by law students all over the world. To conclude this year's Journal there are reports of the very successful GSIA summer visits followed by the book reviews.

Finally, it is a pleasure to thank all of this year's contributors for a most interesting selection of articles and Sylvia Black and Hugh Conway-Jones for their invaluable help with the production of the Journal.

Ray Wilson
September 2004

GSIA VISIT REPORTS FOR 2003

Once again the Society's thanks are due to Frank Colls who organised a full programme of local visits and two excursions further afield by coach. The following reports have been compiled by Frank Colls with a contribution from Ray Wilson.

Sunday 13th April 2003

Afternoon Walk, South Cerney

We were again grateful to Alan and Sue Strickland for providing an interesting walk which followed on from the one in 2002, again covering parts of the Thames and Severn Canal and the route of the Midland and South Western Junction Railway. About 25 members and guests gathered at one of the many lakes in the Cotswold Water Park and Alan explained how the Park had developed from its gravel pit origins to a major recreational area. We picked up the line of the M&SWJR at a brick road bridge near to the site of South Cerney station and heard about the line and its history as a route from the Midlands to the south coast. Opened in 1883 and used extensively during both wars to transport supplies to Southampton, it was finally closed in 1963. The road bridges over the line are known as "lazy bridges" because of the gentle road slopes on each side.

A short walk took us past the River Churn and a mill site, and then on to the Wildmoorway lower lock, much repaired in recent years. To help save water, an adjacent spill pond was built in 1831, the shape of which could still be discerned. About 2/5 of the lock contents could be emptied into the pond to conserve the water so it could be used to partially refill the lock on the next cycle. Alongside were the remains of the lock cottage. The Cotswold Canals Trust, assisted by the Waterways Recovery Group, restored the bridge here in 1996. Alan referred to the article by Theo Stenning in the 2001 GSIA Journal which summarised the current restoration position. An important element of the restoration was in progress just north of the lock where a new bridge was being built to take the busy B4696 spine road over the canal. Nearby we were shown a canal milestone, regrettably broken and without its metal marker plate. We proceeded northwards along the towpath to the Wildmoorway upper lock, again in fair condition, and then to the shallow Boxwell Spring Lock, added in 1792 at a cost of nearly £87 to assist the water supply.

After following the towpath past the site of Crane Bridge we returned to the line of the railway at another lazy bridge. From the underside we could appreciate the skills of the builders in the fine brick arches. Leaving the railway we headed towards South Cerney church and a bend in the main road was pointed out as the result of a change in 1278 to allow an adjacent fishpond to come within a manor boundary. The fine church exterior was seen and not far from the church was a Victorian-Gothic building, Ann Edwards College (now apartments) set up to help the "widows and children of distressed clergy". We saw the site of the South Cerney upper mill, noted as a fulling mill in 1285, before following the mill stream to the lower mill (corn) which was rebuilt in 1700. The arches for the water course were clearly visible in the structure of what is now a private house. Regaining the line of the railway, we went through the site of South Cerney station, though nothing remains, before arriving back at our starting point. Thanks were expressed to Alan and Sue for again giving us a very varied and fascinating afternoon.

Sunday 27th April 2003

Afternoon Walk – Swindon’s Railway Village

This visit was arranged through the New Swindon Mechanics’ Institution Preservation Trust. They are currently housed in part of the former GWR Museum where we met our guides for a tour around the area. A group of 14 members had an interesting afternoon seeing parts of the railway village and many other features which arose from the development of Swindon into a major railway centre. In 1835 the Great Western Railway began transforming the small market town of Swindon into a major hub of locomotive and railway engineering. The many workshops and foundries were supported by the adjacent Railway Village and, as the GWR grew to its eminent position, the town expanded. A Mechanics’ Institution was built in 1854 to form a valued educational and social centre.

We had a short walk to see the exterior of this fine building, with its 1892 extension, which has sadly fallen into disuse and dereliction. Nearby, we saw the elegant terraces of workers’ houses as well as the church, school, pubs and other sites from the early years of the railway village. We returned to the Museum building for a welcome cup of tea and a talk on the work of the Trust, an enterprising group of local people, community organisations and others. They are determined that the structure and the site should be regenerated as a new social and cultural centre, fully incorporating its industrial heritage. We heard about their ideas and plans for achieving this and the campaigning and fund raising involved.

Then followed a walk into the upper part of the town which, as well as taking in many other sites of interest, gave us a chance to see the area of the railway village from some good vantage points. Many of the buildings and sites pointed out were included in a comprehensive pamphlet which we were able to purchase from the Trust to support their fund raising. This covers a range of historic and more recent features and will no doubt be useful for members when revisiting the town independently. It was soon time to thank our guide, Donald Brunwin, and his colleagues for their hospitality and their efforts in showing us around and telling us about the work of the Trust.

Sunday 11th May 2003

Morning visit to the Severn Princess ferry at Beachley

The project to restore the Severn Princess ferry is a major undertaking being tackled by a local preservation group. We had the chance to visit the ferry and about 20 members met at the Old Ferry Inn at Beachley to meet Tim and Steve Ryan and other members of the preservation group. We couldn’t get on board the vessel since further work is needed to make her safe for visitors. It was low tide at Beachley and the Severn Princess was seen below us resting on the stony, muddy area alongside the river bank. We could see her dilapidated state and Tim began to tell the story of the ferry between Aust and Beachley. From the 1930s it provided a vital link in the road route between England and South Wales but the completion of the Severn road bridge in 1966 made the ferry service redundant.

Three vessels were eventually in service but only the Severn Princess, commissioned in 1959 and carrying 19 cars, survives. Having worked for a time on the river Shannon and elsewhere in the 1970s, she was in a poor and half submerged state when a group of enthusiasts from Chepstow came up with their rescue scheme. The Irish owner accepted an offer to buy her for one guinea by Steve Ryan on behalf of the preservation group and a concrete repair on the hull enabled the vessel to be refloated. The tow back from Galway to Chepstow was a

dramatic trip in poor weather. After some more work on the hull at Fairfields she was eventually towed round to Beachley at the end of April 2003.

To get a closer look at the ferry we walked down to the shore by the original ferry slipway. Some members recalled the times they had used the ferry and the rather hazardous manoeuvre to drive from the ramp on to the vessel's deck, and vice versa. We then went to the pub to see several display panels of photographs and press cuttings giving the history of the ferry service and of the rescue of the Severn Princess. These will form the basis for a small museum to be set up in the pub cellar in due course. The vessel needs a considerable amount of work to bring her into a state where visitors can be safely allowed on board and to show how she would have looked in her heyday. We had a collection for the funds of the preservation group who, while facing many hurdles, have the enthusiasm to see the project through. We thanked Tim and his colleagues for a fascinating morning and wished them well in their future efforts.

Sunday 1st June 2003

Coach Trip to the Welshpool area

We had an almost full coach for this trip and thanks are due to Geoff Gilman of the Friends of the Montgomeryshire Canal who helped on planning but could not be with us on the day.

At our first stop at Pant we met Tony Beardsell of the Llanymynech Heritage Focus Group who guided us around some of the tram road features and sites related to the extraction of limestone from quarries in the area. After telling us about the general history and showing us a good display of photographs, maps and small tram road artefacts, Tony took us on a walk around the main quarry area on Llanymynech Hill. Mined for lead and copper in the 17th and 18th centuries, and then for limestone in the 19th century, the area is no longer worked. We saw the remains of the headgear of a rope hauled incline and followed some of the tram road routes towards the canal where stone and later lime were transferred to barges. Some conventional lime kiln structures were seen before we arrived at what was probably the most unusual feature of the visit, a Hoffman kiln. Originally designed as a brick kiln, the principle was modified for limestone burning. It is a downdraft continuous ring kiln about 150 ft by 50 ft giving space for 14 separate chambers around a central core. A load of limestone was built up in the chamber and then heated by the hot gases from the adjacent chamber by adjusting the air and flue openings. Once heated, coal was shovelled in from above and the burning commenced with the hot gases being drawn through an underfloor flue to the tall chimney at the end of the structure. This process was continued around the chambers in turn, with the lime product being removed onto trucks from each chamber after cooling. It was thus a continuous process around the kiln as each group of chambers were loaded, heated, fired and then emptied ready for reloading when the active section came round again. The Llanymynech kiln was not very efficient, compared to other Hoffman kiln designs and only operated between 1899 and 1914.

It was then on to the canal and Tony was joined by Jonathon Phillips of the Canal Friends to show us some of the main features and hear about current restoration work. Since abandonment in 1946 there was no active restoration work until some limited activity near Welshpool in 1969. In the 1980s and 90s some more concerted efforts have resulted in a gradual series of improvements, although much remains to do. We were shown sections near the Wern aqueduct and then had a picnic lunch by the neatly restored locks at Carreghofa. Jonathon explained the general background and pointed out the interesting paddle gear, some features of the nearby keeper's house, and a feeder channel from the River Tanat. We then

walked along to see the impressive Vyrnwy aqueduct before saying thank you and farewell to our hosts and joining the coach for the short drive to Llanfair Caereinion and our trip on the light railway.

This is the western terminus and headquarters of the Welshpool and Llanfair light railway which was celebrating its centenary this year. Closed in 1956 but reopened in 1963 by a group of enthusiasts, this 2'6" gauge line is now firmly established as a major attraction in the area. We had the chance to see the sheds, rolling stock and the station itself with its shop and Edwardian tea room before joining the train for the 50 minute run down to Welshpool. There was just time for a look around the town, including some further canal side developments on a navigable section of the canal, and some refreshment, before joining the coach for the drive back to Gloucester.

Tuesday 17th June 2003

Social Evening – Rodborough Church and Woodchester

This was a departure from our usual "town tour" type of social evening and about 25 members and guests took the chance to see a couple of interesting items, one closely associated with a former President of GSIA, Wilbert Awdry.

Reverend Awdry was just an ordinary member at the Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene in Rodborough following his retirement but he contributed greatly to its activities. A few years after the death of his wife he offered to commission and fund a new stained glass window at the church in her memory and as thanksgiving for their marriage. Several themes were important to him when he asked Alfred Fisher, FMGP FRSA, to design the window. These covered the spiritual significance of everyday things, the four elements of earth, water, air and fire, children generally and his own family in particular, and the whole idea of caring for others. A further source of inspiration had to be his famous stories of Thomas the Tank Engine. The Reverend Awdry was much pleased with Fisher's design but his death in 1997 meant he never saw the completed window. All were impressed by the window with its simple but striking images covering the chosen themes, and its bright colouring. The spiritual symbolism was clear and the scene of Thomas being put into his shed at the end of his working day in a corner of the window was finely and modestly depicted. We thanked Mrs Griggs for opening the church for us and for relating the story of the window.

It was then on to Woodchester where we assembled at the garden of Alan Brackenborough who had kindly agreed to show us his model railway. This is an O gauge railway with an 80-yard track around the garden and several branches and other features in a large shed. Alan had designed the electrically operated system on the basis of the GWR of the 1930s with passenger and goods trains and stock, and many buildings and scenes appropriate to the period. Alan had a couple of fellow modelling enthusiasts with him to help run the system and answer the many questions which arose. They put on a very comprehensive show of different train formations being shunted together and making journeys around the layout, itself a splendidly landscaped and engineered sight. Everyone was impressed with the overall high standard of modelling and attention to detail. This was a delightful visit on a fine summer evening and we thanked Alan and his friends for showing us a wonderful example of modelling expertise. Some members then went along to the Ram public house to finish off a memorable evening.

Tuesday 15th July 2003
Afternoon visit to Chalford Chairs

Our traditional visit to a site of current manufacturing brought us this year to Chalford Chairs, furniture makers who specialise in high quality chairs, sofas and suites. We were grateful to Mr Peter Nankivell for showing a group of 18 members around the premises at Chalford. This is a small scale business occupying an older building which had a variety of previous manufacturing uses and was a steam powered joinery in 1870.

The firm began in 1958 and now uses “English” beech which comes from Denmark. We heard about the construction of the wooden frames to a wide range of standard patterns and sizes, and saw some work in progress. We then saw the fabric cutting room, making use of standard templates for the various sections of cloth relating to the different parts of each item. This stage requires very careful work to ensure that the patterns on the resulting pieces of cloth are properly aligned so that they can be accurately sewn together to retain the overall design. The next stage of machine sewing is equally demanding to get the final appearance right and we then saw the fascinating machine by which the squab cushions were tightly filled with foam stuffing. Finally we saw the assembly stage when the metal spring units (from a supplier in the Birmingham area) were fitted to the frames before completing with upholstery padding and covering, all fire retardant.

Mr Nankivell then took us to his showroom where we were able to relax into some of the very comfortable chairs and sofas which the firm produces. He told us about the way they run the business, mainly supplying new furniture on a made-to-order basis but also re-covering older items. He had given us a very informative talk as we were shown round, with some nice stories about the company and some of the more unusual items they had made. We were pleased to be able to make donations to a charity which he supports in gratitude for giving us such an interesting afternoon.

Sunday 10th August
Afternoon walk, Stonehouse and Nailsworth Railway

This was part three of Ray Wilson’s look at the line of this former railway and its adjacent features and 30 members assembled at Cainscross on a fine afternoon for the circular walk. We started with the remains of the former Carpenter's Brewery which are visible from the car park and now form part of the Royal British Legion club premises. It was then a walk of about half a mile down to the site of the former Dudbridge Station but there was plenty to see on the way. The combined milestone and sundial with its various inscriptions was noted outside Tricorn House. This is the notorious 1960s office block, seen by many as a great eyesore, which has been empty for several years. Passing by Cainscross roundabout the former garden of The Lawn was reached. The large house had been demolished in the 1960s to make way for road improvements including the roundabout. It was once the home of H J Edwards who was responsible for Stroud's first public electricity supply in 1916. Generation took place at the nearby Dudbridge mill and the power was carried by underground cables up to The Lawn which housed about 200 lead acid batteries in the basement. The batteries could be charged whenever the mill had spare generating capacity and then used during the evening to power a handful of lamps in the town. This arrangement did not last long and within two years a small generating station was installed at The Lawn. The old garden belonging to the house is now a public open space. The public area leads on to Dudbridge Upper Lock on the Stroudwater Canal and after crossing the canal we looked at the large collection of early 20th

century redbrick buildings on the Dudbridge Mill site. This had been the home of famous Stroud names such as Copeland Chatterton and Redlers Conveyors who were no longer in existence. The first was well known for loose-leaf business systems and the second was known nationally for handling equipment for maltings and distilleries.

It was noted that the character of Dudbridge has changed considerably in recent years since the demolition of the Lewis & Hole foundry and other businesses and their replacement by the J Sainsbury supermarket which opened in March 1997. The foundry was on part of the site where Hampton Cars operated between about 1919 and 1934. The other part of the site used by the car manufacturer was across the road on the Dudbridge Mill site. The two stone archways bearing a pair of fine 17th century clothier's marks that Sainsbury's saved and re-erected on the site were inspected. In 1996 GSIA proposed to Sainsbury's architects that at least the clothiers marks should be saved and happily Sainsbury's went much further and retained the complete arches.

At Dudbridge station site the outline of the platforms was just discernible although the space between them has been long since filled. In. Sadly more destruction of the remains of the station took place in 1996 to make the new roundabout at the entrance to the supermarket. We followed the track bed as far as Ebley Mill where a diversion was made to inspect the exterior of this very fine stone built mill that was restored and converted into the offices for Stroud District Council in 1987-1990. We had permission to go onto the private terrace to view eastern elevation of the mill and the weir on the River Frome at close quarters.

We retraced our steps back to the line of the railway which we left almost immediately to cross over the busy Ebley by-pass. We then crossed private farmland with permission in the direction of Selsey church to view the Selsley Column which S S Marling bought from the Great Exhibition in London in 1851. This impressive granite column stands about 9m (30ft) high including the plinth constructed from limestone. A description of the column together with its history was given by Theo Stening in the GSIA Journals for 2000 and 2001.

Returning to the railway its line was followed for less than half a mile until the site of the siding for Ebley Corn Mill was reached. The Corn Mill has also been known as Ebley Oil Mill and three years ago it took the new name of The Snow Mill. This is because it has become the headquarters of Snow Business which is a relatively small Gloucestershire firm with an international reputation for providing all types of artificial snow for film and television sets. Trucks were hauled one at a time by a horse along the siding which ran across the flood plain to the mill on a very slight embankment. Near the mill the siding split into two branches. One branch simply terminated in the field while the other branch crossed the River Frome on a steel girder bridge. One of the girders remains in situ.

At this point a start on the return journey was made by walking up Bridge Lane until the canal was reached.. Through the conifer hedge of Bridge House we could just make out one of the circular overflow weirs for the canal. Some members were surprised to see that during the past year the in-filled canal has been dug out and refilled with water between here and Ebley Mill. The towpath was followed back to Dudbridge passing the canal crane supplied to the Stroudwater Company in 1856. This structure is of considerable interest to GSIA as preventive maintenance carried out by members in 1998 and articles on the crane appeared in the 1997 and 1998 GSIA Journals. Happily the crane was 'listed' Grade II in 2001.

We returned to the cars by way of Bridge Street, now a cul-de-sac but which once carried all the vehicular traffic between Dudbridge and Cainscross. The traffic lights at the Cainscross end of Bridge Street have long since been removed but the rubber pad in the road that automatically operated the traffic lights still remains as a very rare survivor. Back at the car park thanks were expressed to the leader for a most interesting afternoon where we saw a rich variety of sites.

R. Wilson

Sunday 31st August 2003

Afternoon visit to the Bugatti Trust at Prescott

This visit was arranged following a suggestion from GSIA committee member Robin Townsend, who specialises in repairs and renovations of Bugatti cars. The Trust has a museum and archive at Prescott, home of the demanding hill climb course. The curator, Richard Day, welcomed a small group of 11 members to the museum where we first had an informative talk from Richard before having a look around the museum displays.

The illustrated talk covered the varied and colourful career of Ettore Bugatti (1881 – 1947), known mainly for his distinctive motor car designs. But, as we heard, he was an artist, designer, inventor and manufacturer with a broad range of interests and a unique approach to style and to mechanical design. From 1909 at his factory in France he developed not only the range of famous racing cars which did so well in the 20s and 30s but also touring cars, luxury limousines, engines, railway rolling stock and machine tools. We also heard about the Bugatti Trust and the comprehensive archive which is much used by researchers, Bugatti owners and others. After the excellent talk we had a chance to look at the many exhibits, which included some complete cars, some of which are still occasionally driven on the hill climb and at rallies. While quite a small museum, it abounds with a variety of engines, components, models, photographs and tools which demonstrate Bugatti's flair and inventiveness. We had had a most interesting afternoon but it was soon time to thank Richard for his enthusiastic and knowledgeable talk and for dealing with all our questions. The museum is regularly open to visitors on weekdays and is well worth visiting.

Sunday 21st September

Coach trip to Hampshire

About 31 members and guests had an enjoyable and varied trip to Hampshire and we were grateful to John Silman of the local IA group for advising on the itinerary and in guiding us around. John met us at Hockley, south of Winchester, where we had a short walk to see the Hockley railway viaduct. This appears to be in brick but is in fact made of concrete with a brick cladding and was one of the first mass concrete structures in the country. The viaduct was part of the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway (part of the Great Western), opened in 1885 and closed in 1960.

We then drove to Hockley Mill, a water powered mill from about 1800 used initially to drive a threshing machine in an adjacent barn. It was adapted with two pairs of stones for corn grinding but eventually fell into disuse. The barn and other buildings have now been developed for residential use but efforts by the Hampshire Mills Group ensured that the water wheel and much of the machinery was retained and partly renovated. We saw the wheel and

drive gear in operation and heard from John about the group's conservation work and the demonstration of the mill to the public on occasional open days.

It was then time for the drive up to Basingstoke to visit Milestones, a living history museum opened a few years ago by Hampshire County Council. Housed in a specially designed building not unlike a large aircraft hangar, this is a museum about life and work in the county from the early 19th century. Members were able to take their own time in touring the exhibits and displays which covered a wide range of social and working activity, laid out in a two-part reconstructed townscape. 19th century industry was well represented by displays depicting the work of Taskers of Andover, manufacturing engineers founded in 1813. A wide range of other small manufacturing and transport firms, various shops, small houses and a pub (serving a fine local ale) completed this picture of Victorian and Edwardian times. The second part of the townscape brought you into the 1920s and later, with shops more typical of that period, the gramophone shop demonstrating the latest dance music on 78rpm records. The transport engineering firm of Thornycroft, which moved to Basingstoke in 1898, was well shown with many preserved vehicles and engines and a good video display outlining their history. The final area of the museum covered the history and work of the locally based Automobile Association. There were many other points of interest and this very well run museum is certainly worth coming back to.

Our final visit was to Crux Easton where we saw a very unusual wind engine, recently restored by a voluntary Conservation Trust. Designed by J.W. Titt of Warminster and erected around 1891, this is a forerunner of the fixed blade "prairie" type wind engine. It was installed mainly to pump water from an adjacent borehole to supply agricultural and domestic water in the vicinity, but was also used as a power source for other purposes. The 48 adjustable canvas sails are mounted on a 20' wheel, with a fantail to control the orientation relative to the wind, and the wheel is set upon a 32' lattice steel tower. We were able to witness the wheel in operation, though nothing is connected to the engine. It was soon time to depart and we thanked John Silman especially for his assistance, his navigation and his commentary. He had told us a number of interesting stories about the places we passed, many of which he knew personally since he grew up in the area.

Sunday 12th October 2003

Afternoon walk – Ruspidge in the Forest of Dean

Ron Beard of the Forest of Dean Local History Society had kindly agreed to lead this walk and we had an attendance of over 40 people meeting at the car park to the south east of Cinderford on the site of the old Ruspidge Halt station. Ron outlined the themes of the walk as the extraction of sandstone, limestone, coal and ironstone and related transport routes.

We set off to join the line of the tramroad which originally ran from Cinderford to Bullo Pill. Started in 1809 this was renamed the Forest of Dean Railway in 1826 and bought by the South Wales Railway who realigned and converted it to a broad gauge line in 1854. The line was used both to export stone and coal to Bullo Pill on the Severn and to transport coal and ironstone to the iron works at Cinderford. Various furnaces had operated at Cinderford over a period from 1795 with final closure in 1894. Still following the line of Cinderford Brook, we passed a house where Ron's father had lived near to the site of Bright's Mill, a 19th century water powered corn mill. To the west of the brook and over the hill was Lightmoor colliery, one of several in this part of the Forest, which closed in 1940. Ron referred to the freeminers and their origins and the method of granting "gales", specified areas for coal working, under

the system used in the Royal Forest. He also told us about the move to amalgamate many of the gales following a parliamentary Act of 1904 to allow further exploitation of the Coleford High Delph seam. This led to the formation of 6 major companies one of which, Henry Crawshay & Co Ltd, developed and ran Eastern United and Northern United collieries whilst continuing to exploit the Lightmoor house coal seams. Over the brook we came to an area where colour mills had been worked using ochre from the nearby ironstone workings. Cullamore Bridge, by which a tramroad branch to Lightmoor crossed the main tramroad, took its name from the colour works. We had a look at a mine entrance, the Meerbrook level, connected underground to Lightmoor and used as a drainage outlet from there.

We left the tramroad line by a path through a private garden, access having been arranged by Ron with the owner, to see a building once used as a Cast House where Crawshay's company had produced castings for Lightmoor colliery. Reaching the main road through Ruspidge Ron pointed out Staple Edge quarry which had yielded the Pennant sandstone used on Telford's Over bridge. We soon came to the site of Eastern United colliery opened by Crawshay in 1909 and running till 1959. A number of buildings survive, including the pithead baths now in use as a paint works. We then walked up to the Shakemantle limestone quarry and heard about the range of ironstone mines which lay below our feet. The four shafts of the Shakemantle mine, begun in 1829, had supplied much ironstone for the Cinderford iron works by linking with the original Bullo to Cinderford tramroad rather than the newly developed route of the railway just to the west. Underground, water was a major problem for Shakemantle and for the related ironstone mines at Buckshaft and St Annals and pumping engines were installed at Shakemantle powered by Lightmoor coal. We moved uphill to an area of scowles and on to the site of the Buckshaft mine, now a Severn Trent pumping station extracting ground water just as the earlier mine owners had done but for different reasons. The Buckshaft area is now dotted with modern housing and nothing remains to tell of the once busy industrial scene of the 19th century. We returned to the start near Cinderford Bridge and thanked Ron for a most interesting afternoon.