



# NORTHAMPTONSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

## NEWSLETTER ISSUE 93 - 'WINTER' 2005

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Welcome to 2005 and I do hope you all had a jolly Christmas and New Year, in spite of the terrible news which flashed across our screens on Boxing Day. Can't believe that Easter is fast appearing in the shops. No doubt Christmas will soon start at Easter - heaven forbid!! As I write there has been another very heavy frost and everything was white on the fields. It's times like these when I am glad I no longer have to get up at the crack of dawn to catch the 7.03 train to London! I must give a big thank you to all of you who are sending me articles, keep them coming and these will be used I can assure you in later issues. A little bit about submissions will be found at the end of the newsletter - please read carefully. As usual one or two reports will be 'out of sync' but will be addressed in later issues. Time waits for no man as you well know and it is always something of a shock when it's time to write up the next Newsletter. It can't be three months since the last one, but it sure is. You will see that we have a new Treasurer and that the committee welcomed three new members to it's ranks. Jan (Treasurer) will be pleased to receive your subscriptions if you have not yet paid up - his address is to be found later on in this issue.

*Jane Waterfield - Editor*

### Summer Trips Continue

#### **Heage & Ambergate, Derbyshire - Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July**

A somewhat overcast morning saw NIAG members gathering in the car park of Heage Windmill in Derbyshire. Towering over us was the restored, stone built, six sail windmill. Perched at the top a steep slope this is an impressive monument to traditional wind power.

After a short introductory talk we were taken into the mill to view the machinery. Our guide, Alan Gifford, who had taken a major and very active part in the restoration, proved a fund of knowledge on the history, design and working of the mill. However the main point of interest was his explanation of the difficulties encountered in restoration. These naturally included difficulties with bureaucracy and fund raising but also the dilemma as to what form the restoration should take. After much deliberation it had been decided that as far as possible the restoration would try to restore the

mill to the state it had been when last worked in 1919. This meant that it would represent a mill in its final stages of development and at its most technologically efficient state. Considerations also had to be made to take account of modern structural and Health and Safety regulations.

Heage Windmill was built in the 1790's. A photograph from the 1880's shows it with 4 sails and a fantail. During a violent storm in February 1894 the cap and sails were blown to the ground. Rebuilding saw the installation of the six sails with patent adjustment mechanism. This and further developments which saw the conversion of some of the wooden gearing to iron kept the mill operational until 1919 when the fan tail was severely damaged in a gale. The poor economic situation and the competition from nearby steam mills meant that the mill closed down and was allowed to become derelict.



Leaving the mill we walked into nearby Heage and the local hostelry for a hearty lunch; the puddings leaving us needing a long walk.

Malcolm took us by way of field paths to the remains of the Cromford Canal. A typical canal bridge, which now spans the arm of a fishing lake, told us that we were on the right track. Following the now filled in course of the canal we were soon confused as to the actual route. This was made more difficult by finding the remains of what appeared to be a long abandoned rail bed which caused much discussion and conjecture. Further distraction was created by a herd of fierce looking long horned Highland Cattle seemingly roaming at will on our path; fortunately they were more interested in eating the undergrowth than chasing us. The canal route was re-established when we found the Buckland Hollow tunnel cut through the solid rock. The route was then easier to follow and the masonry sides of the canal were often evident when the canal was not completely obliterated by back gardens and allotments. Again we were confused by the presence of an abandoned rail bed parallel with the canal. This was eventually identified as the Midland Railway Butterly line, between Ambergate and Ironville. Crossing the main A610 and the modern rail track we observed what might have been the remains of Stephenson's rail bridge spanning the River Amber. We filed along the foot of the embankment forming part of the Bullbridge aqueduct, which also crossed the river here, and climbed up past the ruins of a couple of limekilns to the level of the canal only to find further progress halted by private gardens.

Leaving the canal, a brisk walk in the sun brought us back to the foot of Heage windmill where we could appreciate the dominating position taking maximum advantage of the prevailing westerly winds.



Our thanks once again go to Barbara and Malcolm Hill for their organisation of this delightful day out. We look forward to the next Derbyshire Day.

For more information about Heage Windmill contact  
Heage Windmill, Chesterfield Road,  
Hinge, Belper DE56 2BH - telephone  
01773 853579  
Or [www.heagewindmill.co.uk](http://www.heagewindmill.co.uk)

*Jan Fajkus*

*[I really feel that the Summer of 2004 has to be noted as being the year of the Cow for the majority of the walks. Is there something happening here that we don't know about - cows bells ringing out from*

*one area to the next that NIAG is once again grouping for a walk. Absolutely incredible that yet again these animals were in attendance - perhaps we ought to organise a 'Spot the Cow walk' for this year!! - Ed]*



### **Culworth Forge - Part 1 - Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July**

The summer programme arrangements were for NIAG to visit Pearce's Tannery but due to circumstances beyond our control this had to be cancelled. This provided an opportunity for Martin Rowley, of the Culworth Forge, to meet the 12 NIAG members who were to visit the Forge the following week and explain some of the things we might see. We met at our home and Martin fascinated us with his account of what he is achieving in making a clock in the same way that blacksmiths would have made clocks in the past. He gave a number of reasons why he chose to make a clock in this manner: it was something he wanted to do but did not have to do; there is great satisfaction in making simple things; if you make it, you know how to repair it; clocks are not metric so you can get away from those tens; and an iron clock is wholly recyclable. Martin was sorry that whereas in the past nearly everything that was required in the village could be made in the village, nowadays nothing is made there. Making a clock was an opportunity to reverse that trend.

Until about 150 - 200 years ago, the tools used by blacksmiths were the only ones available for making clocks but after that time specialist tools were developed and clock making moved away from blacksmiths to specialist clockmakers, as in the Clerkenwell area of London. Whilst blacksmiths were the makers of clocks, the techniques available to them included forging, drilling, hacksawing (but when was this invented?), hot and cold chiselling, grinding on a rotary grindstone and filing. No use was made of a lathe (not used by blacksmiths until after 1900), electric or gas welding, or electric angle grinding.

Martin gave out copies of a drawing showing the clock he is making. He emphasised that no bronze or brass castings were used for bearings. Lantern pinions are used, being easier to make than meshing gears. He has kept the number of teeth to a minimum, used standard parts and made them large enough to provide a reasonably large tolerance. No threading equipment is used so the frame of the clock is held together by keys and tenon joints.

Following alcoholic and other refreshment, Martin was asked a great variety of questions. Most of these he answered on the spot but several he explained would be best answered when we were at the forge. All of us are grateful for Martin making the trip to Northampton to prepare us for our visit to Culworth in a fortnight's time.

*Judith Hodgkinson & Geoffrey Starmer*



### **Culworth Forge, Part 2 - Friday 30<sup>th</sup> July:**

The 12 NIAG members who managed to get their name down earlier enough to join this visit assembled outside the forge, which adjoins Martin Rowley's house in Culworth High Street. Martin suggested the forge might originally have been in what is now the drawing room. Before he took over, the forge was operated by Gasgoine & Harding who from the 1920s to 1940s described themselves as machinists. This usually implies they had a lathe but no evidence has been found of this. There were other Gasgoines in the district but they all specialised in shoeing, not machinery. Martin emphasised that it is still a working forge and despite his efforts to make the place tidy, there were still things to trip over. There are two hearths, one with a single blast and the other with a double blast bellows, although an electric blower provided the blast at the hearth in use. This did not leave a lot of space inside the forge hence his request that we limited our number to twelve, something we really appreciated as we crammed inside.

Martin invited questions and in answering these he managed to introduce many aspects of the blacksmith's work - and of their philosophic attitude to many aspects of life! The traditional material of the blacksmith was wrought iron but, since this is no longer made, he works in mild steel. Martin

described the differences between the two, breaking a piece of wrought iron to show the fibrous structure and dropping a piece of each on the floor so we could contrast the dull ring of wrought iron with the more pronounced ring of the steel. He explained the use of the main tools of the blacksmith: tongs, hammers (He preferred to use 2 - 2½ lb ball-pein but showed us a cats-head hammer favoured by some blacksmiths), punches, chisels, swages, swaging block - and, of course, the anvil with its beak, pritchell hole, and hardie hole. The anvil stands on a wooden block, traditionally of beech.



**Martin Rowley cutting teeth in blank for Clock gear. Aug 2004**

was hot-rasped. Using tongs Martin transferred the shoe into a foot operated vice he had designed. Earlier he had shown how this could be adapted, by another device he had made, into a grindstone powered by pedalling as on a bicycle. Another device he had made was a wall-mounted crane for holding heavy work on the anvil.

Martin's wife brought in tea, coffee and excellent cakes as the business of shoeing horses was discussed. In the background was the ticking of Martin's clock, of which he had told us a fortnight earlier. NIAG's summer programme always includes a visit to see and hear church bells and occasionally we have seen the remains of the old blacksmith-made clock put on one side after being replaced by a newer clock. To see such a clock working was a very satisfying experience, especially as we knew what had been involved in its making. By the time our visit ended shortly before ten o'clock, all of us appreciated the phrase "ingenuity of blacksmiths". We are grateful for the effort and time spent by Martin for giving us this very good insight into his craft.

*Geoffrey Starmer*



### **Weedon Depot - Friday 6<sup>th</sup> August:**

20 members and guests assembled in the car park at Weedon, under the high embankment of the main-Euston railway line. Out of sight, the canal. Mike Rumbold, our host for the evening, along with Julia Johns a member of Weedon Bec History Society gave a short welcome, information sheets and diagrams for everyone to look at whilst walking around the Depot. A short walk up the hill to the depot and stopping to look at the canal entrance gate before going through the iron gates.

Inside all the buildings are now used by small companies, but with imagination we could envisage the lively day to day workings of this Military depot and all the munitions which would have been stored at the far end in the Armories building.

The present security lodge was formally a Weighbridge office, and the rail lines are still visible. The eight main storehouses were constructed between 1804 and about 1810, though work continued until 1816 on ancillary works. They are about 160 x 40 ft and have 4 rooms (two up, two down) about 40 x 35 ft. There is also a central lobby, which had originally contained two staircases, there is now only one with an electric lift installed around the start of world War II. All these buildings have numbers (see map on page 5).



The railway through Weedon was opened in 1838, and it may be that the rails were provided in anticipation of bringing rail wagons into the Depot. During the protracted attempts to get a Bill through Parliament to allow the construction of the London to Birmingham Railway, the military were quite supportive. Rail access was not possible until after 1885, when an Act of Parliament gave permission for the construction of the branch line to Daventry. This involved altering the position of the station to a site north of Daventry road and made it possible to bring a branch line into the Depot.

Building 15 became the main Receipts and Issues Storehouse. Building 77 currently houses the workshop used by the Fire Service Museum Trust for refurbishing Fire Engines. This is one of a group of buildings which have included, over the years, the Boiler House, Engine Shed and the Power House with machinery to provide water under pressure to work hoists on the front of the Storehouses. Building 5 was one of the main storehouses when first constructed, but from 1845 to 1870 formed part of a Military Prison. This building contained the Governor's Residence, living accommodation for other Prison Officials, a Chapel, Kitchens and other offices. Building 7 contained 120 cells on three floors - this was returned to normal Storehouse use in about 1939.

Building 14 was built about 1902 to house an Examining Store, Armourers Shop, Packing Shop and Carpenters shop. This building continued in use as the location for examining and repairing weapons to ensure they were fit for service until shortly before the closure of the Ordnance Stores in 1965. Storehouse 17, lies outside the original Depot enclosure. It was built between 1900 and 1902 as an army Clothing store. About 200 metres beyond this, but now concealed by modern buildings, is the wall surrounding the Magazine area.

West Lodge, similar to the well photographed East Lodge, has a similar portcullis. The arch was closed by brickwork when the canal beyond was filled. The canal originally continued through this to convey gunpowder to the magazine building.

The large blocked window in the end of Building 8 is evidence that use was made of some of the storehouses as Barracks. At each end of the upper rooms there are chimney breasts and blocked fireplaces and these obstruct the original large window, certain evidence that they were inserted after the building was first built. At the side of the front central opening on the upper floor level there is a remaining pivot of one of the hydraulic hoists which were added to the Storehouses in about 1886 to lift stores to the upper level. Similar details are to be found on Buildings 2 and 1. Electric lifts were installed in these buildings in 1940.

The Casemates were accessible under Building 6. These occur in each of the four buildings on the South of the Canal and are a consequence of the buildings having been built into sloping ground.

A white painted metal bridge over the canal, opposite the end of Storehouse 3, is what remains of a Scherzer Rolling Bridge. This was opened by filling a large tank with water, which caused the bridge to lift and allow canal boats to pass.

This then is the history behind our fascinating visit to the Depot and it is a great shame that these buildings are not part of a Living Museum. It was easy to visualise Weekends of History and re-enactments of the various eras of History - but without the possibility of a large injection of money this would have to remain just a dream. What a lost opportunity. Mike let us walk around at our own pace, members dived off to look at the corner buildings which housed the Guard, others studied the buildings behind the main avenue of Storehouses whilst others just walked leisurely round and carefully studied the brickwork, the design and hearing the sounds of a life long gone. Both Mike and Julia kept pace and were on hand to answer questions when put to them. All too soon we were back at the East Gate and Mike was answering one or two group questions. Our thanks to him and to the owners of the Depot, Cavalry Centre Ltd for allowing us to view the depot.

*Jane Waterfield*

## Weedon Depot - Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September

What's this? I hear you cry.

Another Part II I say.

Interest in visiting the depot in August had raised a 'waiting list'. So a second visit was arranged for this night. It was decided a week before the visit to bring the time forward by half an hour and we all met on a dark and extremely dismal evening. Where was the wonderful sunset of the previous evening, when the light finally left the sky about 7.50 pm.

Umbrellas up and looking a bit damp we walked up to the Gates. Again Mike had handed out the crib-sheets for the visit and again Julia joined the group. I reckon we got about three quarters round when the light just 'went out' and we eventually trudged back in frightful weather conditions to the East Gate for a few group questions of Mike. We had all walked round in a solid group - no diving off this time. At 8.00 pm we said our farewells and thanks to Mike and Julia and hurriedly wound our respective ways home to divest ourselves of wet clothing and have a warm drink.

What can I say except a big thank you to all who turned out, to Mike and Julia for braving the elements again and the next night - 18<sup>th</sup> September - was a wonderful and dry evening with the light finally fading at 8.00 p.m.!!!

*Jane Waterfield*



## AGM Report

40 members assembled for the AGM which was expertly and deftly dealt with by Peter Perkins, Chairman for the meeting. Peter gave thanks to Susan Ranson for all the years she had handled the role of Treasurer, and who was now retiring from the post. Jan Fajkus has taken over the role and he combines this with that of looking after the web-site. Three members were elected to the Committee. No-one had any matters to raise and after a short break the evening continued with Mike Brown's talk on Phipps and Phillips Brewers (*see report below*)

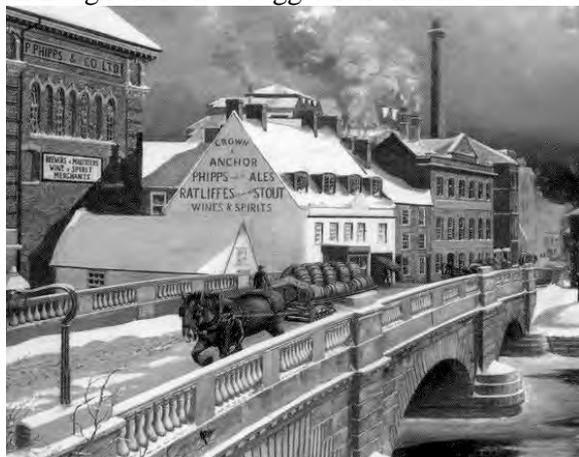
*JW*



## Winter Programme 2004/5

### Phipps and Phillips - Friday 12<sup>th</sup> November

Using this title our member Mike Brown gave the 40 other members present at this meeting a much appreciated different perspective on the brewing industry in Northampton. In his inimitable style, he contrasted the two main brewing families in the town as "Squires 'n Spires" (Phipps) and "Crispin's Comrades" (Phillipps). Beginning with the former, Mike provided us with their family tree. The first of the three brewing Pickering Phipps's was born in 1772, the son of a Bugbrooke farmer. By 1801 Pickering Phipps owned property in Towcester and was producing porter at a small brew house there. Although there is a suggestion that he had set up a brewery in Northampton in 1805/6 Mike thinks this was probably only a depôt.



In 1817 Pickering Phipps leased a purpose built brewery in Bridge Street, Northampton, adjoining the River Nene. Mike thought this might have been for setting up one of his sons, Richard, in the brewing business, or that the canal having reached Northampton in 1815, this town was better for developing the business. Pickering Phipps moved into the brewery house next to the brewery. Eventually all three sons, Richard, Edward (who had a son called Pickering) and Thomas became partners in the business. Pickering (I) became involved in local politics as a Tory, becoming an

alderman and later was elected mayor in 1821. He was an alderman of the town when he died in 1830, aged 58.

At this time two thirds of the pubs in Northampton brewed their own beer, and at this time the Phipps family, involved in farming as well as brewing, supplied malt to many of these. The beer was a dark mild beer, often known as stout. Mike suggested that if we wished to get an idea of its taste, present day equivalents, of which he had brought along bottled examples (which remained un-opened!), were Harvey's Imperial Stout (11%), Greene King's Strong Suffolk (6% in bottles, 10% draught) and Theakston's Old peculiar (5.9%) which is similar to a dark stout.

The Phipps' story was interrupted by consideration of the Phillips family. By 1730 or even earlier they were involved in brewing in a number of places including Oxford, Wapping and Stamford (where the family was still involved until after WW II). From the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Phillips's were also active as carriers, bankers and drapers. They were primarily non-conformists or Quakers (and Mike reminded us that the temperance movement was not anti-beer which it often championed against the iniquities of gin drinking). To keep the businesses within the family it was usual to send sons to Oundle or Uppingham Schools and then to other branches to learn the trade - and to marry. Contrary to what he had written in his "*Brewed in Northants*" (1998, *Brewery History Society*) Mike now considers that it was from the Bicester branch of the family (not the Coventry branch) that the Phillips's came to Northampton. They set up cellars on Wood Hill, which Mike suggested may have been a depôt for the Britannia Brewery at Stony Stratford.

In 1845 the Excise Duty on glass was abolished. This led to an increase in bottled beer and also the introduction of glasses in pubs so that people could see what they were drinking. The Phillips Brothers bought a property in Bridge Street, Northampton with warehouses backing onto the river, in 1857 and converted this into a 'Steam' brewery producing a clear sparkling amber coloured beer using the 'Union' system of brewing. This was preferred by the local drinkers to thick turgid dark beer produced by the other Northampton brewers, forcing Phipps to change to making a clear, bright beer.

Mike illustrated the basic technicalities of the brewing process and the 20<sup>th</sup> century developments by showing slides taken in the late 1960s of plant at the former Phipps and Northampton Brewery Company breweries before continuing the Phipps story.



On the death of Pickering Phipps (I) the brewery passed to his sons Richard and Thomas (Edward had died the previous year). Richard died c. 1840 and in 1843 Thomas brought in Pickering (II) who was then 16 years old. Pickering (II) married the daughter of a wealthy Northampton builder in 1850 and in 1860 they moved to the newly built Collingtree Grange, the same year he was made Mayor of Northampton. He had a second term as mayor in 1866. In 1874 he became the town's MP (The first Tory MP for the town for 40 years) but lost to Charles Bradlaugh in 1881. From 1881 until 1885 Pickering was MP for Northamptonshire South.

In 1858 when Thomas Phipps died, the late Richard Phipps's son, Richard (II) joined Pickering (II) at the brewery, trading as Pickering and Richard Phipps & Co. Richard (II) retired in 1880 at the age of only 43 and Pickering took a new partner, Thomas Phipps Dorman, grandson of the late Thomas Phipps.

An Act of 1869 brought in a new licensing system whereby the licence was tied to a property, not a person. The tied trade grew and it was essential for the company to own more crucial corner sites but this needed extra money and to obtain this the business registered as a limited company in 1880 and was incorporated the following year under the chairmanship of Pickering Phipps with local directors. Unfortunately this gave more people, as shareholders, a say in running the company instead of it being only in the family. Besides the brewery, Pickering (II) was also involved in the company that set up Hunsbury Hill furnaces.

He died in 1890 with an accumulated fortune of half a million pounds. Amongst several memorials erected by the Phipps family to Pickering (II) was St. Matthew's church (in whose parish centre NIAG now meets) on land which he had owned and is today still called Phippsville.

Returning to the Phillips family, Mike told us that in 1868 the brothers raised additional capital by taking on a partner - Samuel Seckham, a very successful architect who had made money in Oxford, retired at age of 41 and was prepared to put in money to build a new brewery. In 1873 the partnership was dissolved and William and Thomas Phillips moved from Northampton and set up separate breweries elsewhere. Seckham took over the brewery trading as Northampton Brewery Company. In 1886 it was decided to change to a new incorporated company with Samuel Seckham as chairman and managing director. Mike thinks Seckham may have been a mason since the NBC sign incorporated the Masonic sign of a double triangle with its reference to Fire, Water, Air and Earth.

The talk then came back to Phipps' brewery, where Pickering (III) took over after his father's death. Pickering (III) lived at Rushton Hall and because of the distance between there and the brewery he seems to have been at work only between 11am and 4 pm. His approach to other aspects seems different from his predecessors. He ignored the traditional links with the local community, such as bringing in malt from a distance and upsetting the local farmers. He tried, eventually successfully, to get rid of Dorman as one of the directors. He brought in a Captain Walker and new extensions were made to the brewery after which Pickering (III) fell out with the Captain, got him sacked and so lost his brewing expertise. Mike felt that all this showed that Pickering (III) was still trying to run the company as a family business and that the brewery would have closed but for the NBC brewery being out of action during WWI (because of a fire and not being allowed to rebuild until after the end of hostilities).

By 1936 Pickering's responsibilities in the company had considerably diminished. In 1957 Phipps merged with NBC and in 1960 became part of the Watney Mann group. Mike concluded by observing that all the breweries forming that group had had a Phillips in them, hence they had all come back together again.



*Geoffrey Starmer*



### **Questions raised?**

My wife and I took part in Roy's walk around Byfield on the 21<sup>st</sup> May. [*Autumn Issue 92*] This was an extremely pleasant way to spend an evening - some might not agree after the intervention of the bovine additions to the party! The walk however, did raise a number of questions which I have attempted to answer here with the help of Eric Tonks books on Midlands Ironstone Quarries and enquiries from an old friend in that area.

Although in Northamptonshire, Byfield, like Charwelton, lies on the North Oxfordshire Marlstone Rock and the quarries there were the product of the First World War. Output from the Byfield quarry was taken out through a connection to the Stratford and Midland Junction Railway, a little way from Byfield Station which we visited on the walk. It is difficult to trace the tracks now because of landscaping in the return of the land to agriculture but it looks from the map in Volume 2 of Eric's books as if the field we were speculating on was crossed twice as it appears to have been the home of the Loco Shed. Certainly it was in that area, but the hedges are all recent additions to the landscape and make it difficult to be certain without overlaying the maps which I have not done. The quarry

did not cease production until February 1965. Bits of the SMJ closed much earlier than this, but the link to the GWR near Fenny Compton was still operational as it was a favourite train spotting place for schoolboys living within cycling distance at that time. The last locomotive to leave Byfield, 'Cherwell' was taken to a recreation Ground in Daventry, where it was used in the children's play area. Recently Health & Safety considerations have led to it being removed. I am not sure where it now resides, but someone will know. I used to see it every week when parking alongside the play area to go shopping.

A little further on the walk back to our cars, and in the gathering gloom, we passed a Military looking building. At the time I suggested it might have been a Prisoner of War camp, although it was a little close to the aerodrome at Chipping Warden. Subsequent enquiries prove me correct. It was a PoW establishment, like so many in the County, (Sulgrave, Litchborough etc.). It is listed in a weblis of PoW camps, unlike the other two named here although both of these are confirmed by personal observation. Like Sulgrave, after the war, it became a hostel for 'displaced' persons for a time and probably was used as emergency housing. It is believed that some former inmates of the PoW camp remained in the area after the conflict, marrying local girls and settling down.

There is clearly a project here for someone to locate all of the Camps that were established in the County. The Byfield one still survives in part. The Sulgrave one has vanished, almost without trace. (The discerning will still spot the sewage works for it and the two 'off-site' officers houses are masked by having had their exteriors cased in brick - my cousin lives in one of them!) How many more were there?

*Michael Constable*

#### **Obituary**

##### **Peter Neaverson**

Many NIAG members will have met Peter at EMIAC events, or know of him from his collaboration with Marilyn Palmer in books such as "Industrial Landscapes of the East Midlands", and "Industrial Archaeology - Principles and Practice". Unfortunately Peter died on 22<sup>nd</sup> December. Geoffrey and Judith represented NIAG at the funeral held at Newtown Linford Church, Leics., on 6<sup>th</sup> January, attended by members of industrial archaeology groups and societies throughout the country - from Hampshire to Westmoreland and from Suffolk to Gloucestershire, with a very strong contingent from the Leicestershire Industrial History Society of which Peter was a member. Two other NIAG members were present - Sylvia and Alan Cross, who had been at University with Peter and had been best man at Peter's wedding.

**R.I.P.**

#### **Of this and that**

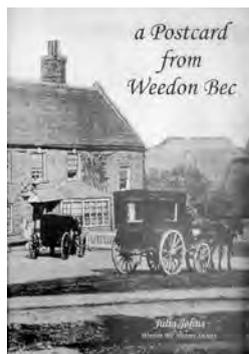
##### **Books:**

*Weedon Royal Ordnance Depot* (1996) publication by Weedon Bec History Society. This contains a reprint of the history of Ordnance Depot written in 1965 by John King. Cost £4.00 plus postage at current cost. Available from WBHS, c/o 2 Little Priel Road, Weedon Beck, NN7 4PU.

*Captain's Pilkington's Project* by Beryl Williams. This records the construction of the Royal Depot. Cost £15.00. Available from Beryl Williams, Sira, Main Street, Whilton, NN11 5NN.

Two excellent publications for reading about the Weedon Depot.

## Book Reviews:



*A postcard from Weedon Bec* (2004) by Julia Johns. Published by Weedon Bec History Society - Cost £5.00. Available from WBHS or Weedon Post Office.

Apart from using the Post Office and going to the Doctor's in Weedon I know nothing of the history of the three villages which make up Weedon. I found that this book gave me an insight into the people and buildings - some of which are still very recognisable today. So many of the buildings now house antiques business, that it is difficult to realise that Weedon High Street (A45) had a diverse range of businesses and shops, as well as pubs and hotels. In fact Weedon seemed to be awash with Public Houses with one (or two) in almost every street. There is also an excellent map in the middle showing Weedon, Upper, Lower and Road in 1899, each being separated by either fields or by the Railway/Canal. Julia has given the reader a wealth of information when describing the postcards and much is linked between them. The book is extremely informative and I spent a happy half hour or so browsing through the pages. An ideal 'coffee table' book and well worth the £5 spent.

*Jane Waterfield*

*Built to Last? The buildings of the Northamptonshire Boot & Shoe Industry.* Published by English Heritage. Cost £7.99

Several NIAG members were present at a large gathering at Northampton Museum on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2004 to celebrate completion of the English Heritage survey of the county's boot & shoe industry heritage and the launch of their new book *Built to Last? The buildings of the Northamptonshire Boot & Shoe Industry*. The event was also used to mark the centenary of Trickers, still producing hand-made footwear at their impressive premises in St. Michael's Road, Northampton.

The English Heritage survey was undertaken over a 4-5 year period and involved investigating almost 500 buildings which remain standing and relate to Northamptonshire's footwear industry although many are now in other use. On two occasions (in December 2001 and March 2004) Dr. Adam Menuge came to talk to NIAG on the progress with the survey and explained some of its findings.

The new publication is not a detailed treatise on the findings of the survey. Thus, it will be of limited interest to the serious industrial archaeologist. If you want to study the detail, you will have to seek out the records held by the County Council and English Heritage. Rather, the book is designed to be of more general interest to the public, to create an awareness of the county's built heritage. However, its excellent colour photographs do make it worthwhile.

In 66 pages, the book covers the development of the boot & shoe industry in the county, describes the main types of building for footwear and leather trades and discusses the issues relating to conservation of the built heritage. Cut-away drawings are used to illustrate how the inside of differing types of operation might have looked in their early years, including an outworker's workshop. The vulnerability of some of the buildings is demonstrated by the photo of the former Britannia Slugging Machine Works in Oak Street, Rushden - demolished during the lifetime of the survey.

The book, while necessarily superficial in its dealing with the wealth of detail about the county's footwear heritage, does serve a useful purpose in helping to increase awareness of the importance of the industry and the need to preserve a representative proportion.

*Peter Perkins*



### **New Treasurer and Membership Secretary**

We now have a new Treasurer. Please send all subscriptions to:

Jan Fajkus  
101 Holly Road  
Northampton  
NN1 4QN



### Television:

It was with some sadness that I learned of Fred Dibnah's death at the beginning of November. Whilst not everyone's cup of tea, for me he brought the industrial age alive with his enthusiastic presentations. I was lucky to meet him when I was working at Warwick Castle - he was working on a series to do with castles and as usual Warwick was chosen for its history. He was a charming man and I am glad that I was on duty that day - needless to say all the youngsters hadn't got a clue as to who he was having never watched any of his programmes!

- Sundays: Channel 4 at 5.00 pm - Time Team - 13 programmes (commenced 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan). Tony Robinson and the team uncover more mysteries.  
Channel 4 at 6.30 pm - 'Scrapheap - Wacky Races' - 5 programmes (commenced 9<sup>th</sup> Jan). Four teams battle to construct the best all-terrain vehicle capable of taking them across the breadth of Britain out of scrap. Whilst this is hardly archaeology, the ingenuity and creativity of these groups has to be seen to be believed.
- Thursdays: ITV1 at 7.30 pm - Waterworld - 12 programmes (commenced 6<sup>th</sup> Jan). Timothy West takes us on another series around the Inland Waterways.
- Fridays: BB2 at 7.30 pm - The Curious House Guests - 6 programmes (commenced 7<sup>th</sup> Jan). A series exploring the history and architecture of country abodes.
- Saturdays: BB2 at 7.10 - Abroad Again in Britain - 5 programmes (commenced 8<sup>th</sup> Jan). Jonathan Meades looks at landmark buildings. (*This may not be everyone's style of programme, but interesting facts could emerge*).

**Dates for the Diary** - Events, Exhibitions and conferences taking place around the Country.

### Early Spring visit to the Rushton Estate - Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2005 -

Glenn Foard will lead a walk for NIAG members and friends around the village of Rushton on the morning of Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2005. We will be accompanied by David Warren a local historian. On our walk we plan to visit the site of the fulling mill in the grounds of Rushton Hall estate (courtesy of owner David Pain) to see what evidence remains, hopefully at a time of the year when undergrowth should be at a minimum.

We will meet in Rushton village at 10am. For those who want to make a day of it, the Thornhill Arms provide a good lunch! If you plan to attend, **please contact Peter Perkins on 01536 713256 before the 12<sup>th</sup> March** to find out where to meet and in case of any last minute change of plan.

**A permanent Exhibition** - The Architecture Gallery - has been opened at the V&A in London. According to Hugh Pearman who writes in the Sunday Times Colour magazine, this is a joint venture between the V&A and the Royal Institute of British Architects. The two collections have been put together in a purpose designed space and the new gallery with its associated study room and archives has cost in the region of some £10m. The exhibition is aimed at the general public and it is hoped that more understanding will be gained as to why buildings are as they are. So if you are in London and happen to be near the V&A please pop in and send a report to us.

**2-3<sup>rd</sup> April 2005:** AIA Ironbridge Weekend : at the Ironbridge Institute, Coalbrookdale. Advance notice only.

**23<sup>rd</sup> April 2005:** South East Region IA Conference - at Chertsey Hall, Heriot Rd., Chertsey, Surrey. Hosted by Surrey Industrial History Group. Advance notice only.

**21<sup>st</sup> May 2005:** EMIAC 69 - Worksop at Work - Please see enclosed leaflet.

### What was it?



A photograph of a piece of ironstone showing a high density of oolites. It would have been found at Easton on the Hill Quarry.

### **Finally, but not quite :**

#### **From the Northampton Mercury 6<sup>th</sup> May 1815**

“On Monday 1<sup>st</sup>. was opened the Branch Canal between the River Nen, at this town, and the Grand Junction Canal, which gives a water communication from this place to all parts of the kingdom. The day being remarkably fine, a great multitude of persons assembled to witness the first arrival of the boats, several of which were laden with various kinds of merchandise, manufactured goods &c. &c. from Ireland, Liverpool, Manchester, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Warwickshire, London, Bristol &c. &c. and upwards of twenty with coals. From the greater facilities thus afforded to trade, and particularly in the article of coals, the inhabitants of this place and neighbourhood may reasonably anticipate considerable advantage. - After mooring the boats, amidst the firing of cannon, ringing of bells &c. different parties spent the remainder of the day with the utmost cordiality, - We are sorry to state that the occasion was not entirely free from gloom; one poor man had his thigh fractured by a gun bursting, and a little boy one of his fingers torn off by one of the boats, in passing through a lock.”

*No H&S in those days then!!*

### **Finally - to get you thinking!!!**

#### **Railway gauges:**

The US Standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8½ inches.

That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used?

Because that's the way they built them in England, and the US railroads were built by English expatriates.

Why did the English people build them like that?

Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did they use that gauge then?

Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing.

Okay! Why did the wagons use that odd wheel spacing?

Well, if they tried to use any other spacing the wagons would break on some of the old, long distance roads, because that's the spacing of the old wheel ruts.

So who built these old rutted roads?

The first long distance roads in Europe were built by Imperial Rome for the benefit of their legions. The roads have been used ever since.

And the ruts?

The initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagons, were first made by Roman war chariots. Since the chariots were made by, or for, Imperial Rome they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing.

Thus we have the answer to the original questions. The United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet 8½ inches derives from the original specification for an Imperial Roman army war chariot. Specs and Bureaucracies live forever. So the next time you are handed a specification and wonder what horse's ass came up with it, you may be exactly right - because the Imperial Roman chariots were made to be just wide enough to accommodate the back-ends of two war horses!

When we see a Space Shuttle sitting on the launch pad, there are two big booster rockets attached to the sides of the main fuel tank. These are the solid rocket boosters, or SRBs. The SRBs are made by Thiokol at a factory in Utah. The engineers who designed the SRBs might have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRBs had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line to the factory runs through a tunnel in the mountains. The SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than a railroad track, and the railroad track is about as wide as two horses' behinds. So a major

design feature of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system was determined by the width of a horse's backside.



Happy New Year



**NIAG Committee:**

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Chairman: Peter Perkins, Eastfields Farmhouse, Manor Road, Rushton, Kettering, NN14 1RH  
Secretary: Roy Sheffield, 7 Elysium Terrace, Northampton, NN2 6EN  
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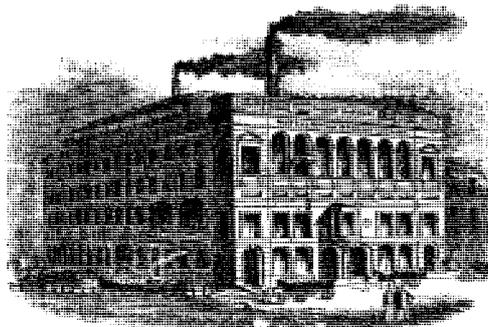
**Newsletter:**

**Next issue - April 2005.**

**Deadline** for all articles and information: **20<sup>th</sup> March 2005** anything received after this date will be held over to the next issue.

Could I please request that any articles which are submitted, including some of the reports, be kept to a minimum of one and a half pages - I do not wish to cramp your style or enthusiasm but we certainly need to keep a tighter hold on the length of the articles/reports.

Please submit by e-mail, fax or mail. Where possible photographs are encouraged to illustrate all articles. When submitting photographs it would be appreciated that they are not sent via e-mail as this can take a very long time to download and the quality is not always good. Preferably send photographs/slides by post (first class) and these will be returned to you the same way. Please also include your name and address so that you can be credited with taking those photographs!



The Phoenix Brewery, Bridge Street, about 1891