



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 95 'SUMMER' 2005

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You may well wonder at the slightly higglety piggalty run of the reports in this issue. This is purely due to the fact that the 'wonderful e-mail' which everyone bangs on about has been well and truly 'up the spout'. "Send it by e-mail, better than the post" - under the recent circumstances I think not. In fact another article which should have come 'down the wire' also failed to materialise as the sender was having his own problems. Ron's article about EMIAC 68 was sent to me two days after the event so he must have wondered at not seeing it in either the Winter or Spring issue. However, I hope that by the time this reaches you the gremlins have disappeared and we are well and truly up and running.

Reports are slowly trickling in for the Summer walks, unfortunately I have taken the 'executive' decision and decided not to go on them, except those that I, with Terry, have organised. This has been a bitter blow as I was really looking forward to seeing all the different places which are on the agenda. Photographs are therefore needed to illustrate the reports, serious ones and the not so serious please. All will be returned to you after scanning, should you wish to send via e-mail because they are digital, can you please telephone Terry to find out in which format to send, as downloading can take forever.

With luck I will see some of you, either at Brigstock or at the Quarry, if I can ever get through to the chap who seems like the Scarlet Pimpernel - we seek him here, we seek him there and all that!! I trust I will have some news by the time this edition goes to bed so please look for the announcement on the back page. Thanks.

In the meantime, have a happy summer and enjoy your explorations.

Jane Waterfield - Editor

Members' evening - 14th January 2005

Keunan's Tannery - Irthingborough

Ron Whittaker showed a series of slides taken in 1986 of Keunan's Tannery in Irthingborough just before its demolition. The tannery was situated close to the River Nene by the old Bridge. It was built in 1916 and the Company was known as 'Nene Valley Tanning Co'. The name changed to Mommersteeg in 1934 and it was purchased by the Pittard Group in 1971. Ron showed many of the typical leather processes such as fleshing, tanning, band-knife splitting, dyeing, vacuum, suspension and toggle dyeing, buffing, dry drumming, spraying and finishing. The tannery was replaced by a modern one-floor building on the same site in 1987. Unfortunately the new tannery only lasted until 1999 when it was purchased by the Griggs Group who were developing the site as part of the Rushden & Diamonds Football Club.

Ron commented that there were now no working tanneries in Northamptonshire and only about 2,000 are employed in the Industry in the UK. China, India and Italy are the main leather producing areas in the World.



Building Stones of Northampton - 11th March 2005

Forty six members and friends were present for Dr. Diana Sutherland's splendid presentation on this subject. She started with a geological map, simplified by leaving off the clays, and introduced us to concentrated or variation of deposits. In the county they have a slope to the south east and the effect is analogous to a stack of books tipping and sliding off each other. There were 23 quarries marked on the Northamptonshire part of the map together with those outside the county at Ketton and Barnack. Most of these would have been familiar to John Morton (author of Natural History of Northamptonshire, 1712) but only four are worked today - Pury End, Harlestone, Collyweston and Pitsford.

The second map homed in on part of the county where the Marlestone Rock formation outcrops along the north-west side. There are now no working quarries on it in Northamptonshire but some



Weldon Quarry
1974

“Hornton Stone” is still extracted from this formation in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. Edgcote House is built of this stone, taken from its own estate. Diana introduced us to RIG (Regionally Important Geological) sites by showing an example at Staverton. The stone is iron rich (Limonite), has a rusty colour and is full of fossils. Although there is no record of what the stone from here was used for, generally the Marlestone Rock was used as rubble stone for buildings in villages on or near the outcrop. The stone was used by the 18th century for the manor house at Byfield, which is of ashlar and has rusticated quoins, and probably came from its locality but the quarries for this have gone due to quarrying for ironstone from the mid-19th C until 1960/70.

This brought us to the Northampton Sand Ironstone which lays across the county apart from the north-west edges dealt with earlier, as above. After a brief mention of the brick-pits in the clays between these formations, Diana considered the Sand ironstone in three areas: the Ise valley; Northampton and the south west; and Finedon and Wellingborough, the latter being the best sources of ironstone for building. She referred to quarries in Northampton Fields (where the general hospital stands); at St. Andrews and at Harlestone and Duston. The latter have a considerable thickness of sand stone and from 1600 at least 17 stone masons were working there. In 1892 a quarry was started by Craddock, from which cottars (sanding bricks) were sent to north England. Henry Martin had a quarry at New Duston in 1924 most of which is now occupied by the Duston Wolds housing estate. However, one rock face is now a RIG site. Pendle from Duston and from Kingsthorpe was used for St. Matthew's church.

A particularly striking slide was of an aerial view of Bradlaugh Fields off the Kettering Road in Northampton. This showed linear quarries and not individual circular ones as appeared to be the case when NIAG looked at the area many years ago. These provided limestone with some sandstone on top. This led to Diana asking a question concerning the origins of the stone used in Abington Manor - was it from these quarries or could its quoins have come from Duston? The building has Weldon stone around the windows.

Consideration of Lincolnshire Limestone showed it did not seem to be deposited south west of Kettering except for some isolated deposits at Maidwell and Harrington. At its base is Collyweston slate along the Welland escarpment where it is found about 15 feet below ground level. Diana referred to NIAG's visit last summer to Easton on the Hill where we saw the lower part of Collyweston slate. The Upper Lincolnshire Limestone was worked in quarries at Weldon, leaving hills and holes and now grassed over. This stone could be cut with saws. It was worked underground and provided a very good stone. In the 1970s it was split using plug and feathers but the stone quarries ended with the extension of British Steel iron ore quarrying for the Corby works. The Weldon stone provided a very smooth and good weathering masonry. It was used in the late 13th century for Rockingham castle.

We were told of Wellingborough Limestone which was found as far away as Culworth, Tiffield (where it was above the ironstone) and Helmdon (from where came the stone for Queen Eleanor's Cross at Hardingstone, although the statues are probably of Barnack stone). Diana reminded us of the 1313 donor's window in Helmdon church depicting a stone mason. She also mentioned mason's tombs in church yards and gave the one at Eydon as an example. This is of marlstone rock and depicts the masons Company Arms - three castle, compasses on a square to make a chevron.

The last group was Blisworth Limestone found along the east side of the county, particularly on the side of the Nene Valley. It was worked in the 'hills and holes' at Cosgrove where Morton recorded underground workings. Around Raunds the stone was got out from very early times and at Stanwick there is evidence of its use by the Romans. The stone is very good in the Oundle area and Diana gave several examples of its use including Major Butler's 1856 house in Oundle; Lyveden New Build of local ashlar from Pilton quarry with Weldon stone for details; and Lilford Hall of 1635, ashlar from Lilford Lodge Farm quarry and using Weldon stone on the chimneys and the fancier bits needing carving. In some areas, ironstone is found just below the Blisworth Limestone, hence the banded buildings in those areas where Duston sandstone was often used for the windows.



Lyveden's famous outline
A combination of Weldon
stone dressings and local
Blisworth Limestone

Many other points were covered in the unusually good discussion for a NIAG meeting. These included the distinction between the terms 'ironstone' and 'sandstone', which also might include some iron. If the latter contains more than 20% iron it is called 'ironstone' but the content has to be around 30% for it to be economic for iron making.

Geoffrey Starmer



EMIAC 68 "Pottering around Ashby" - 16th October 2004

NIAG was well represented amongst the 73 delegates who attended EMIAC 68 at Ashby de la Zouch. An interesting and informative day was spent looking mainly at the pottery industry in the Ashby-Ticknall-Swadlincote area.

The first lecture by Janet Spavold and Sue Brown reported on extensive research they had undertaken on the Ticknall pottery industry from the 15th to the 19th century. There were 7 identified potteries in

the 1500's and this was similar to the figure in North Staffordshire. This had increased to 13 potteries by the 1700's compared with 67 in North Staffs. The sites were mainly along the Derby road between Ticknall and Ashby but there was also a cluster around Heath End near Staunton Harrold. The lecturers showed many examples of parts of pottery which had been found in fields in recent years. The Ticknall industry declined due to competition from Stoke who were more innovative and moved into factory production much faster. The speakers are producing a book on the research which will be published in March 2005.

Wendy Freer covered the development and industrial history of Ashby which was a prosperous 19th century market town. With the coal, pottery and textile industry (mainly framework knitting) all around, Ashby kept free from industry itself. Approx. 20% of the male population were employed in Agriculture in 1851 and this led to a high number of agricultural implement suppliers being in the Town. There was also a large number of leather workers including hand made boot and shoe manufacture in the mid-19th century. In the 20th century the main industry was soap manufacture and Meredith and Drew's biscuit factory which still operates.

Geoff Purseglove covered the recent developments on the Ashby Canal. At the present time the section between Snareston (where the canal was sealed off in 1966) and Measham is being restored, although a different route is having to be taken around Measham. The canal at the Moira Furnace was restored in 1998 - 2000. This is an exciting development and one for NIAG visits in future years.

The afternoon was spent in Swadlincote looking initially at the restored site of Sharpe's Pottery. The site, which has been made into a museum and heritage community centre, includes a bottle kiln hovel built in 1821. The pottery operated from 1821 - 1967 and used local clay. The second part of the afternoon was spent on a walk around the John Street/Pool Street area which contained common land, colliery and a number of potteries. The current TG Green works incorporate four listed bottle ovens

The only slight negative comment on the day would be that as with many EMIAC's a better introduction to the area and day's events might have been appropriate at the beginning. However LIHS should be congratulated on providing a well organised and interesting day.

Ron Whittaker



Rushton Hall Estate and Fulling Mill - March

On a Saturday in March 2005, about a dozen NIAG members gathered for a tour of Rushton Hall Estate courtesy of landowner David Pain. The tour was lead by Glenn Foard and we were joined by local history expert David Warren. The main aim was to examine the site of the 18th century fulling mill before the undergrowth became impenetrable due to Spring growth, but the opportunity was also taken to explore the grounds.



Sir Thomas Tresham, bought Rushton estate in 1438. Another Sir Thomas Tresham was last Lord Prior of the Knights Hospitallers, during the reign of the catholic queen Mary. His son, also Sir Thomas, was another zealous Catholic but now in the reign of Elizabeth I, with England once again a Protestant country. He demonstrated his faith in the design and decoration of several of the elaborate buildings he constructed, most notably the Triangular Lodge in his park at Rushton (begun 1594;

completed 1597). He was imprisoned as a Catholic in 1580 and died in 1605, the year his son Francis died in the Tower as a Gunpowder Plot conspirator.

The Tresham family were great sheep farmers, developing their sheepwalks through the enforced depopulation of villages. Rushton's open fields were enclosed piecemeal between about 1581-1604. The Treshams enclosed 80 acres of demesne in 1581 for sheep pastures and 110 acres of their tenants' land. In 1590 a further 80 acres were enclosed. Not surprisingly perhaps for an estate so heavily involved in sheep farming, by 1732 a fulling mill stood some distance to the west of the Hall.

The present House originates in the Tudor period and was developed with various additions and rebuilding right through to the 19th century. The church of St Peter still stood beside the Hall in the 18th century but Rushton became a united parish in 1780 and faculty was granted to remove St Peter's church in 1799. At some time after 1732 the north-south road was also re-aligned and the parkland extended eastward to a newly constructed road and bridge (the latter carrying the date 1829), which remain today.

The evidence for the existence of the fulling mill comes mainly from an 18th century sketch of the hall and its park, which shows the mill. The Northampton Mercury indicates that tanning was undertaken on the site sometime after 1720.

At the site of the mill, we were able to make out the extent of the former mill-pond in the spinney which now fully encloses it. We also examined a stone-lined embankment at its eastern (downstream) end. It is thought that this is the remains of the dam although there was some conjecture that it could be the remains of a later Victorian earthwork. Out in the open, we were able to see where platforms for buildings associated with the mill would have been located.

Elsewhere in the park, the early alignment of the road from Glendon and the bridge itself could be seen in the parkland south of the river. However, the high embankment here is unlikely to have been present when the original road ran along that alignment and probably formed part of a carriage drive which ran round the periphery of the estate.

Peter Perkins (Report)
History of Rushton Hall Estate courtesy of Glenn Foard



AIA Visit to Southern Belgium - 18 to 22nd April

This year five of the 31 participants were from NIAG: Mike & Sue Constable, Stephen Miles, Judith Hodgkinson and Geoffrey Starmer - the highest number from any IA society or group!

An 8.30 am start for the coach from near Victoria Station is not the easiest time for travelling from Northamptonshire especially now there is no direct train for London for our Long Buckby contingent. After the sea crossing from Dover to Calais, our first stop was at Arques, in France, to see a hydraulic canal lift of 1887. It no longer works, having been replaced by a lock which overcomes the difference of level of 13m in one operation and takes 1350 ton barges, but the old lift has been preserved complete with all its machinery. This includes the pumps for the lift and also a complete workshop, in a wonderful state of preservation, powered by a water turbine.

Following an over-night stop at St. Omer (a delightful small French town with cathedral, which closed as soon as we got to the door!, buildings still showing vestiges of Art Nouveau, and a chocolate shop which demolished low-cholesterol regimes) we visited Le Grand-Hornu. This Neo-Classical colliery complex comprising two grand courtyards, one of which is elliptical and arcaded, features in many books on industrial archaeology. However, recent conservation and conversion to a museum of contemporary art has virtually destroyed the industrial feel of the place.

The afternoon visit was to an immense quarry engaged in the extraction and transformation of Belgian Blue Limestone. It is one of the largest ornamental stone quarries in Europe. There had

been a rain storm earlier in the day and walking around the top of the quarry was like a quagmire and we were thankful for the pre-visit advice of bringing boots or Wellingtons (the latter being more appropriate for a site not too far from Waterloo!). The size of the operation was immense - over 470 employees and extracting 140,000 cubic metres of ornamental stone annually. At this rate the company estimates there is 60 years of stone left. Judith remarked that this is a very short time compared with the millions of years it took to get the stone into its present state. The stone was brought out of the quarry by large Caterpillar tractors, or large cranes mounted at normal ground level.



Rail Transferer for transfer of blocks from Quarry to stone saws in sheds on left
Carrières du Hainault Soignes

In the past there would have been a network of narrow gauge railway tracks but there is no sign of this. However, serving the cutting workshops at the surface were wide gauge rail tracks and wagons working as traversers instead of using points or switches.

Tuesday night was spent in Mons, where we did get into the cathedral - interesting rather than exciting, a description which applies to the rest of the town/city!

On Wednesday the first visit was to another mining village, Bois du Luc. This was built for the local mining population from 1838 to 1853 with 162 houses on two main streets crossing at right angles in the middle. A village hall was erected near the crossroads and rebuilt in 1923. We were able to go inside only to find a number of elderly Belgian biddies rehearsing for a concert to be given in the near future. The response to our entry was a wonderful example of Anglo-Belgian ‘cordiale’ with laughter and hand-shakes all round. The hall could accommodate 1000 people (some village hall?) and equipped with a large sloping stage and orchestra pit, indicating the investment by the colliery owners. The mine closed in 1959 but the hall has been very well restored with the intention of becoming a major part of the local cultural life - but who is going to choose to live in the quite small ex-miners’ houses?

Lunch was in the former canteen for the Italian labourers who came to work in the Belgian mines after WWII but we can’t imagine those Italians had such a good meal as we had there. The afternoon was spent along the Canal du Centre, between Mons and Charleroi, which was approved by Napoleon 1 in 1810 but the entire length was not opened until 1917. From our lunch stop we walked along the canal to Lift No. 1, a wonderful Meccano-like structure. Unfortunately it has not been working since January 2002 after a major accident. Due to a problem with the hydraulic system, the upper caisson began to descend, causing the lower caisson to rise just as a barge was leaving. The stern of the boat was lifted and its weight held down one end of the caisson resulting in its distortion. More than three years on, the caisson is still distorted and the much damaged barge is moored alongside the bank below the lift.



Strépy-Thieu Boat Lift - Canal du Centre

Our party then divided. The young and active walked along the canal to Lift No. 2 whilst the others went by coach to Lift No. 3 to await them. Lift No. 3 is of similar construction to No.1 (and No.2 and No. 4!) and is still workable, used by pleasure boats on runs extending no further than No.1. After visiting Lift No.4 the coach took us to the Strépy-Thieu counter-weighted lift which was begun in 1982 as part of enlarging the Canal du Centre to take 1350 ton boats (quote from a booklet on this lift “a modern 1350 ton barge can carry as much as sixty-five 20 tonne lorries, which is equivalent to an unbroken queue of over two miles on the road”). This lift

and the new line of the Canal du Centre were eventually opened at the end of 2001, by-passing the old line with the four lifts. The new lift is an enormous civil engineering structure providing a 73.15m difference in height. The canal is brought to the upper level on a high aqueduct from a vast artificial hill approached by a long concrete aqueduct across roads and motorways. It makes an immense and awesome impact on the natural landscape compared with our old canals which now seem to be part of the countryside.

The last visit on Wednesday was to yet another way of changing height on a canal - the Ronquières inclined plane built in 1962 on the Charleroi-Bruxelles channel. On this, the boats travel in a tank of water in line with the rails (not sideways, as was the case at Foxton) for a change in level of 68 metres. There are two tanks which work separately and independently since both are counterbalanced by large weights running on rollers beneath the tank-carrying rails. The upper end is now a very modern visitor centre where viewing of the incline is only through glass - not in the open air! It is said that it takes 40 minutes for a boat to ascend the 1432 metres of rails but the one some of us watched did not seem to take that long. On each day of this visit we saw plenty of canals and the group benefited from Sue and Mike's excellent commentaries on these.

Wednesday and Thursday nights were spent at Charleroi. On opening the bedroom curtains on Thursday morning we looked out on to a panorama of transport: in the back ground the busy high-level ring road, then the vast frontage of the railway station, to one side of which was the tram terminus (with an archaic shed over a single track but accommodating a succession of trams to different destinations) alongside the city bus centre, and between this and the hotel was a waterway on which 1350 ton barges were moving!

Thursday's visits began with some remains of the Solvay Company in the form of an Art Deco building which was not all that impressive - not nearly so impressive as the network of railways we crossed and re-crossed in getting on and off the ring road, and the number of freight trains they carried. The main morning visit was to yet another colliery, Bois du Cazier. The buildings are more modern and attractive than most colliery buildings but sadly their main claim to fame is that they were the scene of a dreadful mining disaster in 1956 when a fire broke out on 8th August and rescuers took until 23rd August to conclude that 262 lives had been lost. The day by day, hour by hour reports of the attempted rescue operation must have been broadcast in the UK so perhaps some of NIAG's older members might remember this.

After lunch we visited Binche, south of Charleroi. The name is synonymous with its internationally acclaimed carnival where the festivities are so extravagant that the name "Blinche" has given rise to the English word "Binge"! However, the main aim was to see the railway station, constructed between 1905 and 1910 in the Flemish gothic style but having a wealth of decorative ironwork on the platform side. Our route back to Charleroi was on the main road along which a "Vicinal" used to connect the two places. Sadly this is no longer the case but the Charleroi tram system uses the route at the side of the road as far as one of the intermediate villages - but no trams came along whilst we were alongside the route.

Before returning to the hotel our coach made a diversion to the huge steelworks which is part of one side of Charleroi. The pollution it causes seems far worse than we can remember for Corby and most of the party remained in the cleaner atmosphere of the coach whilst some of us foolhardy individuals went up on the elevated platform for the tramway to get a better view (or taste?!?). There was an escalator up from street level to the platform of Providence (what a name for something overlooking a steelworks!) station and most of us unthinkingly put our hand on the moving hand rail only to find when we got to the top that our hands were as black as they could be.

On Friday we returned to England, although most of the morning was spent at the Distillerie Claeysens at Wambrechies. No work was going on there since it seems we were out of season for the production of Belgium gin. However, there were wonderful opportunities for photographing the plant - from roller mills for the grain, wonderfully archaic grain roasting drums with their equally ancient drive arrangement and some of the most complicated pumps we have ever seen. After all this

the final stills were not nearly so exotic although the tasting of the various gins they produced made a good end to the visit.

Geoffrey Starmer and Judith Hodgkinson



SUMMER WALKS

Dickens Leather Dressers, Northampton - Wednesday 27th April

Courtesy of our member Brian Dickens, NIAG members had an opportunity to visit one of the few remaining leather companies in the county. Dickens Brothers Ltd is a small family company, which has been producing leather since 1897. Originally operating as leather dressers, the company now only finishes leather.

Founder of the company, William John Dickens, set up in premises at 40 Victoria Street in Northampton and in 1898 opened a factory in Kerr Street. In 1899, he bought land behind 69 Kettering Road where 6 cottages stood and built a 4-storey factory on the site. Strangely, the key feature for which the premises are noted today - the arched entrance gateway with 2 storey offices above (see picture in NIAG's gazetteer on page 61)- was in existence before Dickens Brothers built their factory. Although the company owns the buildings above the gateway, Brian Dickens does not know the origins of it.

The 3-storey factory was built in 1900, financed by a loan from Dickens' brother-in-law - Stephen Norton Walker, the shoemaker at Walgrave. In the early years the company produced hand stuffed or curried vegetable tanned calfskins and cowhides for boot upper leathers. In 1903 William John Dickens died and his sons took over the company, forming Dickens Brothers in 1921.

In later years much of the leather came from the Indian sub-continent. Since 1980, the company has bought in tanned leather, then had it contract dressed before finishing it to customers' requirements at Kettering Road. Today, Brian Dickens runs the company with a staff of no more than half a dozen. Hides are still supplied to the shoe industry but also increasingly to a range of other industries

Touring the factory, members had the opportunity of examining hides as received before being sent for dressing. We then viewed the various finishing operations, including buffing, plating and spraying. Of particular interest was the leather area-measuring machine for checking the size of each hide. This is a mechanical device that uses a system of pin-wheels to sense the presence of the leather as it passes beneath.

We had the opportunity to examine a range of photographs covering the company's history over the last 100 years. We were also treated to tea and coffee! Many thanks to Brian for the opportunity to see an example of what is a fast disappearing UK industry and for his hospitality!

Peter Perkins



© Peter Perkins

Desborough Tour Part 2 - Friday 13th May

On an extremely chilly but bright Friday evening, some 14 members gathered in the car park of the Midlands Co-op supermarket on the site of the former Midland Railway goods yard for the second part of our tour of Desborough. As last year our guide was local historian John Lee who has now risen to fame by way of appearing on the BBC's Gardeners World programme as keeper of the national collection of penstemons!

Heading east from the car park along Rushton Road, we passed the ends of streets of Victorian developments, which had been a mixture of houses and shoe factories. Sadly, for the most part the factories have gone. King Street had been the home of B Toone & Co, which had been the largest shoe manufacturer in Desborough. The company started sometime between 1885 and 1900 and was a direct descendant of Leicester based Toone & Black.

On the western corner of Queen Street had been the factory of the W & E Turner, shoe manufacturers from the 1880s. By 1909, the Desborough Shoe Company were occupying the site, the business being started by the Elkington family. In 1930, the same family built the fine house known as Oaklands on Rushton Road opposite the junction with Headlands. The factory was taken over by Max Griggs in the 1980s for production of Doc Martins boots but closed down in the 1990s - it is said so that the machinery could be sent to the former Clarks' factory which Griggs had bought in Somerset!

The new fire station is now on the site of the factory but on the opposite corner of the Queen Street junction is a detached garage which although now much altered was originally the first fire station in Desborough.

Joseph Cheaneys with offices fronting onto Rushton Road is now the only shoe factory still in production in Desborough. Its extensive factory extends back to Regent Street where a two-storey Edwardian shoe factory is still evident.

On the north side of Rushton road just past the Pipewell Road bridge is a solitary house, now Cheaneys factory shop. This was the Sheepbridge Coal & Iron Company manager's house whose ironstone quarries were on the other side of the railway. Adjacent to it is the former site of Rigid Containers, now cleared for housing.



The former corset factory at Desborough

Walking further down Rushton Road past the Desborough Co-op shop (in competition with the Midlands Co-op supermarket!), we passed the site where the Rothwell Quarries tramway passed beneath the road in a tunnel. This tramway linked the ironstone quarries on Rothwell Hill to the tipping dock adjacent to the Midland Railway near to the former Desborough & Rothwell station.

Reaching the site of the former water mill, we were able to gain a brief view of the mill house (in private hands) through the trees. The mill itself, which dated from the mid-18th

century, was demolished in the 1930s. Earlier, in 1890, the mill and mill house were acquired by Rowland Underwood Kendall who manufactured umbrellas there and sent them by train to the London shops. They were considered an upmarket umbrella and today they are very collectable.

Near to the mill site is the electronics firm of Lee Dickens which started up in the Kettering Road Northampton premises of Dickens Leather Dressers. The latter was recently visited by NIAG and is run by our member Brian Dickens who was also with us this evening.

Our visit finished in the Cemetery with its fine wrought iron gates and fence. Opened in 1898, the chapel was built of Weldon stone and for many years was the home of the town bier, built by William Pass from Wellingborough and now in the Heritage Centre.

Peter Perkins



Farm Visit near Norton - Friday 20th May

12 of us met on a warmish bright evening at Thrupp Grounds a quarter of a mile from Norton Village. Our genial host Oliver Adams took us all by surprise when he and his wife invited us all into the farmhouse for a coffee before looking round the Farm. A pleasant hour passed whilst Oliver explained the history and his involvement with Thrupp Grounds. It was good to hear that as custodians of the land they were being encouraged to manage the countryside in a sustainable manner

The Adams family has lived in the area for 200 years, farming at Welford and then at Norton in the twentieth century. Joe Adams (son) lives and farms at Watford whilst Oliver is based at Thrupp. This area was once owned by Daventry Priory until Henry VIII commandeered the land when he abolished the Monasteries and later gave it to Christ Church, Oxford the present owners.

Once outside, our attention was taken first by the house itself. It was clear that the windows had been made smaller and Oliver said that this had been done before he and Yvonne had moved in, probably sometime in the late 19th century. The farmhouse was built of brick and stone, it originally had a thatched roof and this was taken down and replaced with tiles sometime in the 1950's. Oliver made us smile when he said that the house is draughty and quite cold, the frames of doors and windows not quite fitting snugly. No double glazing here!!

Moving to the barns where we were first shown the massive tractors and trailers. There was also the area where the grain was stored on an aired vented floor. A pigeon, trapped in the roof, managed to escape through the door whilst we took our fill of these huge machines. Moving on to other sheds which contained massive machinery we were shown - grass-cutters, spraying machines, loaders, machines for swathing rape to name but a few, before being allowed into the shed which housed the workshop and the harvesters. My breath was taken away by the sheer size - it's one thing seeing them in the fields slowly harvesting, but quite another seeing them up close.

Views from the farm are across to the Grand Union Canal and Norton Junction, with the M1 just visible. In some of the barns as we moved through the 'farm yard' were young calves, who were skittish at the sight of people, eyeing us with wary eyes, which put me in mind of when Terry took me to the Agricultural Show at Stoneleigh some years back for the first time and I, admiring the faces, was bluntly told that the judges judged the other end!!

Jane and Terry Waterfield



© TJ Waterfield

One of the machines and view across the valley to the Canal from Thrupp Grounds

PoW's Campsites

I was very interested to read Michael Constable's follow-up observations on the NIAG visit to Byfield last May (Issue 93) and in particular the comments about the site of the former PoW Camp. Michael went on to ask how many more such PoW camps there are in the county. I am currently compiling a short report to go in to the next edition of the journal *Northamptonshire Archaeology* on the archaeology of this very subject! Drawing on records in the county Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), a recent English Heritage survey and the work of local military archaeologist Adrian Armishaw, we know that there were six main WW2 PoW camps in the county. These German Working Camps were at:-

Boughton Park Camp	Camp No 35
Byfield Camp	Camp No 87
Little Addington	Camp No 98
Weekley Camp, Boughton Park	Camp No 259
King's Cliffe	Camp No 702
Weedon Camp	Camp No 1010

In addition some of the main sites maintained satellite camps and hostels. Byfield had nine hostels, including those referred to by Michael Constable at Sulgrave and Litchborough. Others are believed to have been at Greens Norton, Long Buckby, Barby, Thorpe Mandeville, Litchborough, Daventry, Yelvertoft and Naseby. Some later provided Land Army accommodation as with that at Yelvertoft which may continue in use to this day, incorporated into what is now the village hall. Weekley Camp had satellites at Wansford and Collyweston and hostels at Harrington, Corby and Blatherwycke.

I am particularly interested in establishing the extent and nature of any physical remains of these sites. Any such information would be much appreciated and I can promise will be passed on to add to the existing SMR records on PoW camps in Northamptonshire.

Graham Cadman

Graham's contact details are: Address: 90 Lower Thrift St, Northampton NN1 5HP or e-mail: gcadman@northamptonshire.gov.uk

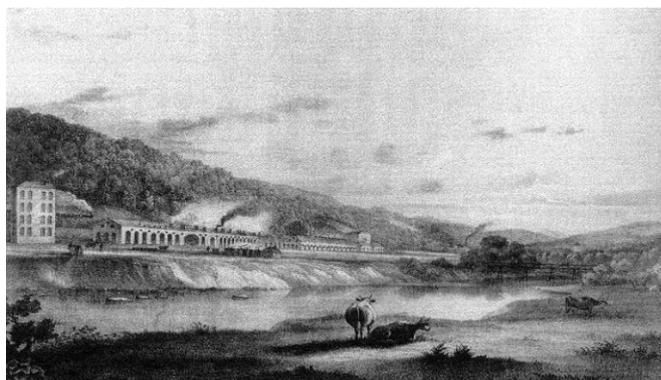


Speaking of Blacksmiths

A group of NIAG members enjoyed a fascinating visit to the forge at Culworth in the summer of 2004. The skill, innovation and dedication of the blacksmith shone throughout Martin Rowley's talk as he demonstrated his craft with technical knowledge and fine sense of humour.

I wondered if my great, great, great grandfather had such humour or sense of innovation and a range of technical skills suited to his work. Baptised in 1797 John Llewelyn was probably introduced to the skills of blacksmithing as a young boy in Llamsamlet, near Swansea the centre of the industrial world in the late nineteenth century.

John, with his wife Anne, moved to a small village near Merthyr Tydfil to work in the Cyfartha Ironworks. John was not a village blacksmith but a blacksmith of the industrial revolution working for the wealthy and influential Crawshays who founded the Cyfartha Ironworks.



Treforest Tinworks c1840

Originally from Normanton near Leeds Richard Crawshay bought the ironworks in Merthyr Tydfil and was succeeded by his son William and his grandson also William. John's blacksmiths shop would have been sited with other small workshops outside the works and he would have been responsible for producing tools, doing

repairs and whatever else was needed to support the industry. In addition to these workshops were a whole host of supporting industries such as ironstone mines, collieries and limestone quarries. These attracted large numbers of men from farms and whole families became involved in the various processes of iron working. Many migrant workers, particularly from Ireland, ensured a plentiful workforce and kept wages down. Cyfarthfa Ironworks produced munitions for the British Admiralty and exported iron products to Mediterranean countries, Turkey and Russia moving its products from the ironworks and at a later date down the purpose built Glamorgan Canal for export from Cardiff. The poor living conditions, bad housing and extreme poverty all contributed to the infamous Merthyr Riots which took place while the Llewelyns were living here in 1831. Alexander Cordell writes with some accuracy in the "Fire People" of the riots and the harsh and dreadful living conditions endured by workers employed in iron working at this time.

It was perhaps fortunate for my ancestor that in 1836 Crawshay started building the Treforest Tinworks and put Francis Crawshay, known by the workers as "Mr Frank", in charge. He was a popular employer and friendly with his workforce. He must have asked John Llewelyn to become his foreman of blacksmiths. The census of 1841 shows the Llewelyn family John and his wife Anne, four sons and a daughter living in Forest Row Treforest, one of the growing rows of industrial housing for workers in the tinsplate works. The 1841 Census shows the family with lodgers one a fitter up and one a nailer. Ten years later John is a widower, his eldest son has left home but William, his son of 23, is a fitter up in the iron works, his other son Llewelyn is an iron roll turner and his daughter age 15 is a dressmaker. Thanks to the eccentricity of Francis Crawshay I have a unique record of my ancestor. "Mr Frank" engaged the services of an itinerant portrait painter, W J



John Llewelyn
Foreman Blacksmith
Treforest Tinworks - c1836

Chapman, sometime between 1835 and 1840. Instead of commissioning paintings of himself and his family Francis had painted in watercolour a number of his workers at Treforest and Hirwaun. One of these portraits is of my ancestor John Llewelyn. Originally used to decorate his office the portraits are now in a private collection. Having obtained a copy of his portrait I now have an unusual record of John my great great great grandfather in his working dress and described as foreman of smiths, Treforest. A short man with humorous eyes standing proudly in his clean apron and wearing a top hat.

None of John's family went on to be blacksmiths, although I am a dab hand with the bellows if the fire goes down, however two of his sons continued to work in the iron industry. Again some "head hunting" may have happened when the industry of the Merthyr and Treforest works began to lose out to competition John's son William Llewelyn took his much needed skills and moved his family north to the new industrial site of Stockton on Tees. The Llewelyn's became one of many migrant families from Wales and settled in an older part of the town which became known as the Welsh Quarter. Close to where the family lived in 1881 were familiar Welsh names, Evans from Pontypridd - furnaceman, Morgan from Merthyr - ironworker, Jenkins from Carmarthen - bar roller. Here the family thrived in the iron and later steel industry until eventually in 1916 my father was born and the family were again forced to seek better paid work in North London but that is another story.

Christine Teulon

With thanks to my husband Alan who has painstakingly researched the Llewelyn family for me, taken me to Cyfarthfa Museum and to the site of Treforest Tinworks.



Of this and that

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

1st October: EMIAC 70 - NIAG in conjunction with Towcester & District Local History Society - "Towcester at the Crossroads" - 9.30 am to 4.00 pm at The Leisure Centre, Towcester. *Booking form is enclosed.*

2-8th September: AIA Derbyshire Conference 2005. At Nottingham University. Main conference Friday evening to Sunday and post-conference additional programme from the Sunday to Thursday. Details available from 0116 252 5337 or e-mail: AIA@le.ac.uk

Bookings for this event are going well, except for the pre-conference seminar on Friday 2nd. Whilst it is mainly aimed at the 'professionals', but if you are prepared to pay £45 anyone may attend. Marilyn Palmer has put together an excellent set of speakers.

So, if you have a weekend to spare, get in touch with the organisers - details as above.

8/11th September: National Heritage Open Days

21-23rd October: The Wonderful Windmills of Lincolnshire. Weekend coach tour based at Lincoln, to take in a number of mills, some of which have been specially opened for the visit. Contact: Zoe Tomlinson on 01522 851388 or visit www.lindumheritage.co.uk for more details.

Finally, but not quite :

Visit to Cliffe Hill Quarry - Saturday August 13th

After a great deal of hassle, letters written in February, no replies, unable to speak to the right person and leaving messages galore with a Secretary, with still no formal letter of whether we could go or not, and last but not least, why on earth I was bothering, I think we have had contact - a few minor points to clarify and this **trip will be ON.**

There are 7 (seven) places left. I now urgently need to know if there are those out there who would like to go. Please let me know by Monday 1st August at the latest (01327 312850 - answer-phone facility).

Finally

When we went to the Farm I took quite a lot of photographs, we had also been on the Canal at Stoke Bruerne and gone through the tunnel, again taking photographs. Then I finished up the film with some shots for the Village Design Statement, and went to change it. No blooming film in the camera!! Can you honestly credit it? I've done some daft things such as baking my glasses in an oven (another tale sometime) but this really annoyed me. From now on - rule no.1 check for film in camera!!



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Newsletter:

Next issue - October 2005.

Deadline for all articles and information: **17th September 2005** anything received after this date will be held over to the next issue.

Article guidelines: No more than 1½ pages long please. Photographs to be inserted if submitted.

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!

July 2005

A selection of photographs from the AIA Belgium Trip - Report page 5



© Geoffrey Starmer

1. *Workshop for St. Emmanuel Coal Mine, closed 1959. Now a museum. Bois du Luc*
2. *Tram Terminus near Central Station, Charleroi*
3. *Lift No.1 1888 - 15.40m rise - Canal du Centre*
4. *Distillerie Claeysens, Wambrechies, Nr. Lille*