



# NORTHAMPTONSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

## NEWSLETTER ISSUE 96 – ‘AUTUMN’ 2005

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The mornings have now got a real ‘Autumnal’ feel about them - mists, a bit of a chill, then glorious sunshine until late afternoon when the cooler air comes back. It’s hard to acknowledge that the year is slowly winding down and into Autumn proper. Harvests, Bonfire Night (not again!), Armistice and the Winter Talk programme which is enclosed with this issue. A chance to meet up with friends who perhaps have not been seen since March when the last programme finished and for one reason or another do not ‘do’ the walks during the summer.

I had to take the ‘executive’ decision not to do many of the walks as I knew the arthritic knee would let me down - what an absolute pain (in more ways than one!). The ones that Terry & I organised I did attend and managed to amble along quite nicely, thank goodness. Personally I am glad to see the back of August and get back into the normal swing of things as the whole month was a nightmare almost from day one. We attended one wedding - niece and quite enjoyable, since our minds were on the, at the time, one death and one imminent. Then came the two funerals in the space of nine days, one in Hertfordshire and the other on the Isle of Man, and then blow me a third 10 days after that here in Northants. Talk about Three Funerals and 1 Wedding - apologies to the film with Hugh Grant. You will appreciate it’s been hard to concentrate especially when both of the friends were younger than us!

If you are supposed to be giving me a report of any summer visit, can you please get them to me pronto. I am missing quite a few and it may well be that we will be catching up again in the Winter issue (due January). So please get writing and I look forward to being inundated with material. Oh! and did anyone attend the EMIAC day in Worksop? A short report will be welcomed.



## SUMMER VISITS CONTINUE

### Wadenhoe Church Tower - Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May

Cecil took us round Wadenhoe Church Tower, which is situated high above the Nene Valley. The Tower contains a ring (or peal) of six bells, three of which were cast in 1937. Two recast with added metal in 1937 by John Taylor of Loughborough. The largest or Tenor bell was cast by Tobias (or Tobie) Norris I of Stamford in 1607.

The six bells hand in a steel and cast iron frame by John Taylor & Co. 1937.

<u>Bell</u>	<u>Founder</u>	<u>Dia</u>	<u>Weight</u>		
			<u>Cwt</u>	<u>Qrs</u>	<u>lbs</u>
Treble 1	John Taylor & Co. 1937	26"	3	3	3
Treble 2	" "	27½"	4	1	8
Treble 3	" "	30"	5	0	5
Treble 4	Recast " (Tobias Norris 1603)	31½"	6	0	14
Treble 5	Recast " (Pre-Reformation)	33½"	6	2	21
Tenor 6	Tobias Norris I 1607	36"	7	1	6

*Food for thought? How did they transport the bells from Stamford in the 1600's? Was it by the Great North Road to Wansford and then by the River Nene from Wansford to Wadenhoe.*

*Cecil Swann*



### Dodford Walk – Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> May

A most pleasant evening heralded our perambulation of Dodford and its surroundings and approximately 20 members were in attendance. Parking was courtesy of the Dodford Village Hall secretary and our party set off from there through the village and on to the long-abandoned Weedon to Daventry railway trackbed. We had double benefit from this part of the walk as a disgruntled landowner, instead of letting us leave the trackbed at the point we encountered him, made us walk back the 200 yards or so we had just come! For this, all attendees were truly grateful. This extra lap also allowed us a view of an underbridge we would not otherwise have seen so, all in all, a most fortuitous rebuff and silver linings all round! Apologies to any who were frit!! John Smith was kind enough to remind us that the writer and wartime adventurer Patrick Leigh Fermor spent part of his early life in Dodford and also, in an altogether more remote era, the Northampton to Warwick turnpike road (temporary alignment) came through the village for a year or two, its course still visible. We crossed fields and the A45 and passed the rear end of Weedon Depot, a view not often considered. Although one or two members were champing at their respective bits to walk over more fields to view Dodford Mill the onset of darkness precluded this and most members were no doubt relieved to regain the safety of the car park with not one rear peppered with buckshot!

*Roy Sheffield*



### Sulgrave – Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June

A very select group, numbering five in all, made the longish trek to the south-west of the county on a fine summer's evening. We set off through fields and explored a section of the Great Central Railway trackbed and, following some small difficulty in finding our way back down the very overgrown embankment, opted to return the way we had come in order to avoid a field full of frisky cattle and excitable horses! Passing Sulgrave Manor we sought out the best views of Sulgrave watermill and fairly distant ones of the windmill, both now transformed into luxury dwellings.

*Roy Sheffield*

*I was beginning to think that we weren't going to hear about any cows this summer. Thanks Roy. Ed*

### Cropredy and the Oxford Canal – Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June

After a week of very hot weather, thunderstorms and torrential rain dominated the scene on Friday. However, by the evening we were left with damp conditions and 14 members made the journey south westwards across the county boundary to join me at the lovely canal village of Cropredy.

Although mentioned in the Domesday Book and the site of a Civil War battle, Cropredy really only developed from 1790 when the Oxford Canal was opened. The village, which still has the canal at its heart, is at the end of a series of locks from the canal summit north of Claydon.

After looking at a well illustrated map on the village noticeboard, the group assembled at the main wharf bridge 153. Wharf buildings as well as a toll house are still preserved and it was interesting to conjecture on the buildings next to the canal where it narrows at the point of the toll house. After bridge 152 we came across Cropredy Lock with Lock Cottage. The site of bridge 151 can still be identified but the next bridge 150 is next to Broadmoor Lock and then the group walked on to Varney's Lock. We then left the canal at Varney's bridge no.149 and made back along a bridleway to walk South into the village along the road from Claydon.

The well-tended gardens of the cottages, post office, church and other buildings in the village are magnificent and make this one of the most attractive canal villages. We made our way back to the canal and returned to the Wharf bridge. Overall a very enjoyable evening although the weather could have been kinder.

*Ron Whittaker*



### Yardley Chase - Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June

A hot summer's evening saw a good turnout to view a selection of railway sites south of Northampton.

The evening started at the puzzlingly named Piddington Station. Piddington is by no means the nearest village, but this name may have been used to avoid confusion with one of the many Hortons.



This delightful building, complete with restored platform, is now the home of Norman Oldfield, who greeted us warmly, outlined some of the history and produced an array of photographs showing the station in use.

We walked south along the clearly defined bed of the old Bedford and Northampton Railway. Sanctioned by the B&N Railway Act of 5<sup>th</sup> July 1865 the line was opened in June 1872. The line ran from Oakley Junction in Bedford to St. John's Street

Station, Northampton until 1939 when trains were re-routed through to Castle Station. The railway was originally worked by the Midland Company. The last passenger train ran in 1962. The line was worked from Northampton to R.O.D Yardley Chase until 1982.

We identified the junction which took military rail traffic into the Royal Ordnance Depot, an ammunition store hidden in the woods of Yardley Chase. This WW2 depot had some 20 miles of track serving the numerous munitions bunkers.

On the B&N track we encountered cuttings and embankments and the remains of the crossing keepers hut. Although only serving a bridle path this crossing was fully manned, the keeper having the additional responsibility of maintaining the track back to the station.

We finally made it to the junction with the Stratford upon Avon and Midland Junction Railway. Built after the 1864 Act creating the East West Junction Railway it was opened in stages with completion in 1891. Built using second hand track on a course with frequent bends and changes of gradient it was known for its difficult working and was known to its passengers as the Slow Mouldy and Jolty Railway. Lack of revenue produced a chequered history. One of the more exotic features was the use, in 1876, of a Fairlie engine. Originally built for a Mexican railway it had a central cab housed between two boilers and a 060060 wheel layout

Although the line was originally conceived to carry iron ore from Northamptonshire to the furnaces of South Wales, it became a through route for freight from the 'West' to London. Notable was the 'Banana Express' from Avonmouth Docks to St Pancras. The line was closed to passenger traffic in 1952.

The site of the junction is now very overgrown. Old photographs show the junction sited in the middle of farmland and not in the middle of a wood as it is now. The substantial signalman's house has disappeared entirely, though after considerable searching in the undergrowth we possibly located the foundations of the signal box.

A long walk back to our cars through the gathering dusk brought the evening to a close.

*Photographs © Terry Waterfield*

*Jan Fajkus*



### **Finedon Ironstone Tramway – Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July**

On a gloomy evening, some 20 members took part in this walk which followed the route of the tramway that linked Finedon ironstone quarries with the LMS Railway just north of Wellingborough, some 60 years ago.

Quarrying had started in the Finedon area as early as 1866, first with the Glendon Iron Co and later with Charles Barlow and Harold Barlow. By 1936, Richard Thomas and Co had taken over the quarries and it was they who dug the massive Buccleuch Quarry to the north of Finedon, the final gullet of which forms part of Finedon Pocket Park.

During the early part of WW2, ore was taken on a narrow gauge tramway from the quarries at Finedon through a tunnel some 2 miles long tunnel to emerge at Richard Thomas' Irthlingborough mine. However, this arrangement did not last long, as in 1941 the standard gauge line was built from the Finedon quarry westwards, under Finedon Station Road and down to the LMSR. This was then the route used to move most of the ore until the whole system closed in about 1945.

Initially, we walked to the eastern end of the quarry to see where the tunnel entrance to Irthlingborough had been located (no longer accessible or visible), also the concrete platform over which ore was tipped into crushers prior to being loaded into narrow gauge wagons to go through the tunnel.

We then proceeded westwards, beneath the ugly concrete bridge under Station Road and down the trackbed of the standard gauge railway, still with its wartime concrete sleepers in place. In places, these have been displaced by trees that have grown up out of the trackbed in the last 60 years. Cecil Swann found samples of furnace slag in the trackbed which, it was thought, may well have come from the site of the former Finedon furnaces.

Our walk had started in a deep cutting, but as we progressed, we found ourselves on an embankment leading down towards the River Ise and the present Midland Mainline. Close to the river is a nature

reserve called 'Cally Banks', giving a clue to the former use of the site - as calcine clamps for ore brought down from the quarries. Since the area has grown over in the intervening years the layout is not obvious. We did muse on the purpose of a concrete path with what looked like brick drainage chambers alongside. Graham Cadman had helpfully brought copies of aerial photographs taken at the end of WW2 which showed clearly the position of the calcine clamps, as well as the extent of the main Buccleuch quarry and the line of the railway.

Return to the start was via the road from Great Harrowden to Finedon and we made it just before dusk and the rain!

*Peter Perkins*

NB: For further information see Eric Tonks' *Ironstone Quarries of the East Midlands; part IV*.



### **Braunston Village Walk – Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July**

About 14 of us got together on a balmy evening for an enjoyable walk around Braunston under the guidance of our host and guide Chris Pardoe, with two of the Braunston History Society's members and for once not looking at a Canal, though we did get a glimpse of it near the end of the evening. Chris introduced the evening with a quick talk about the industry of this Canal Village and then we set off at a steady amble to look at various buildings of the Village, on what must have been the driest pub crawl!

First off we looked at what was once a magnificent house, with premises behind which had been used as a manufacturing works, and which was locally known as the 'Glue factory' as it had once housed the offices of National Adhesives, that company being sold to the National Starch & Chemical company before Unilever and finally to ICI. Back down the High Street, and being told that Braunston had had no less than six pubs - only two remain. Shops included butchers, bakery, fishmongers, ironmongers, a soap boiler and a potato merchant. We passed the house which used to have the post office attached and which is now being renovated back to how it was before the 'carbunkle' was added sometime during the last century. Many former farmhouses occupy other prominent positions.

We took a path down towards the old brick works which stands high on the hill overlooking the Canal and had to use imagination to visualise the workings. Carrying on along the footpath which skirted the 'brickworks' we came to 'Cross Lane'. A cross once stood at the top by the side of the High Street, sadly no longer there. Along Cross Lane itself were the cottages which had been built to house all the extra workers needed for the building, operating and support of the canal and its industry. Most of these, no more than hovels, stretched from the brickyard to the canal bank. In 1914 there was a serious fire which destroyed many of the houses with some 32 people being made homeless. Condemned in 1939, residents were moved into Council Houses, ironically these houses were then reprieved at the outbreak of the second World War to house evacuees from the East End of London!



© Jane Waterfield

With many thanks to our guides Chris and Dave for such an informative walk.

*Terry Waterfield*

## **Richard O'Rourke Memorial Walk at Marsworth - Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July**

Fourteen of us gathered in the car park at Startops, near canal bridge 132 for the B489 road over the main line of the Grand Junction Canal. After a few words remembering Richard O'Rourke (who had been a staunch and very active member of NIAG since its earliest days, had initiated the Group's Saturday canal walks, and had died suddenly in 1998) we headed north-west to the Aylesbury branch of the canal.

During the construction of the Grand Junction Canal, Aylesbury found itself in a very similar position to Northampton. Both branches were authorized in 1794 but it took many years to get them built and both were not opened as canals until 1815. Another similarity was that for each, a railway instead of a canal was proposed. However, although the GLC Company's proposal for a railway to Northampton was realised in 1805, and the Company ordered the rails needed for the connection to Aylesbury earlier in 1800, when these arrived at Wolverton they seem to have been diverted to the railway over Blisworth hill during the construction of the tunnel there.

At Marsworth Junction, the former British Waterways Board's workshops were situated in the angle between the GJC main-line and the start of the Aylesbury branch. Here locks 1 and 2 of the branch made a staircase pair, and we were immediately made aware of the narrowness of the 7 ft. beam locks on the branch. In our walk of just over two miles along the branch we passed a further nine locks, ending with No. 11, Puttenham Bottom Lock. A further five locks gave a total fall of 94 feet 8 inches from Marsworth Junction to Aylesbury. From the opening of the branch, this caused loss of water from the main-line of the canal and necessitated the eventual construction of four large canal reservoirs in the area south-west of Marsworth, three of which we were to see later in the day.



View to NE at Lock 11 – Puttenham Bottom. Aylesbury branch

At the Historic Wooden Boat Restoration yard, just below Puttenham Bottom Lock, we saw the ex-Barlow's narrow boat, "Hood", beautifully restored in all its glory of decorative and colourful paintwork. Behind it was "Hagley", a former wooden horse-drawn boat. These were so different from the several present-day narrow boats using the branch during our walk, one of which we watched going through Puttenham Bottom Lock with about five lads and one girl on board, the latter seeming to do all the work!

Returning along the branch we made a diversion into the village of Wilstone and the Half Moon pub where we had to wait for it to open at 12 noon for what had been planned as a mid-morning coffee stop but turned out to be a most welcome pre-lunch drink. Back at Startops End there was a choice of a pub lunch or bistro lunch at the "White Lion" where some of those who patronised the latter completed their meal with a very exotic pudding - somewhat up-market for a NIAG walk!

After lunch our group was slightly smaller as we set off south-east along the GJC main-line, passing Startops End reservoir (opened 1817) and then Marsworth reservoir (opened 1806) and at the same time following locks Nos 39 - 45 of the Marsworth flight giving a total rise of 42 feet 3 inches. These locks had disused side-ponds, as can be seen along the Stoke Bruene flight. At the top of the flight was a covered dry dock, still in use and shortly afterwards the junction for the Wendover branch which we were to visit later. There were plenty of colourful boats, some moored and several on the move one of which had a very polished engine 'room', as we made our way to the former canal workshops at Bulbourne, on the opposite bank to the towpath. NIAG visited these workshops some years ago when they were still in use by British Waterways. Now they are occupied by a several firms engaged in quite different activities. However, the standard gauge railway with its wagon turntable was still in situ in the workshop area.



Heygate's Mill (formerly Steam & Wind) on the Wendover branch of the GJC.

We returned along the main-line of the canal to the junction for the Wendover Arm. This started as a navigable feeder and was the only way of supplying the Tring summit of the main canal with water when it opened at the same time in 1799. Making our way along the arm, we passed under Gannel Bridge and on the other side of the canal stood the impressive blocks of Tring Mills. These started around 1810 with a tower windmill of five storeys. In 1875 a five storey steam engine powered mill was built alongside the road and canal, the windmill remaining in operation on the south side. About 1891 the mills passed into the hands of Mr W N Mead, who dismantled the windmill in 1911 and used the site to build an extension to the steam mill. The 1875 and 1911 buildings now belong to Heygate & Sons, Bugbrooke Mill, who bought the business in 1944 and two years later converted it to electric drive. *(In 1896 Clifford Hill Mills, Little Houghton, were purchased by Mr. Thomas Mead of Tring Flour Mills, for £4,550. By 1910 Thomas Mead & Sons were recorded at Clifford Hill Mills, and from 1914 until at least 1932 by Frank Albert Mead. How does Thomas Mead fit in with W N Mead at Tring Mills?).*

After one and a half miles from the junction near Bulbourne we reached Tringford Pumping Station. This rather undistinguished building (Better from the reservoir side than the canal side) was built in 1818 to move water from the several reservoirs providing water for the summit level of the canal. We did not see the earliest of these which was near Wilstone and opened in 1803 with its own pumping engine. However, on heading north from Tringford Pumping station

the footpath took us along the west side of Tringford Reservoir (completed 1816) and then along the south-west and north-west sides of Startop's End Reservoir to reach the car park at Startops End. Eventually all 10 of the party that completed the full walk (about 8 miles) ended up in the Bluebell Tea Rooms, to have tea and quite substantial cakes as a conclusion to our day's walking.

Photographs © Geoffrey Starmer

Geoffrey Starmer



### **Building the Holcot By-Pass**

Well, that's what it said at the road-making display at the 8<sup>th</sup> Holcot Steam Rally, held on 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> August, Bank Holiday week-end. If you have not visited this event, you have missed a very good show with plenty to appeal to industrial archaeologists. It is not such a big event as the Great Steam Working in Dorset (to which several of the participants at Holcot were going on to for the following week-end) but it is one of the best shows in the Midlands of steam engines at work.

Obviously there were steam rollers in action on road-making but also present was a large portable steam engine driving a stone crusher. The output from this dropped into Vee-waggons running on a 2 feet gauge railway, with points and turntables, which were adjusted as the road-making progressed. Motive power on the railway was provided by a small diesel loco. Normally based at the Leicester Museum of Technology.

There were several examples of working threshing tackle powered by traction engines. Other demonstrations were of loading felled-timber onto wheeled transport for delivery to a number of different steam powered saw benches, emitting loud screeches as the timber was propelled onto the

circular saws. Elsewhere on the site two sets of ploughing engines were at work drawing the plough from one engine to the other on the far side of the field. In another field four pairs of horses were at work - clearing, ploughing, harrowing and sowing. More horses were seen hauling tradesman's carts and vans.

Steam and entertainment were represented by six showman's engines ranging from the large Fowler 7 horse power "Iron Maiden" which featured in the film "Genevieve" to the blue-painted 4 horse power Garrett showman's engine built in 1913 and brought over from Holland by its Dutch owner. Some were powering organs of which the biggest was a Gavioli Concert Organ that had originally worked in a München beer hall. This had a stage to front it and at intervals a Scarborough-based troupe of girl dancers performed to the organ music - including the Can-can. There was plenty of other entertainment during each day, including a splendidly stocked beer tent, the beers changing each of the three days, and collections of tractors, cars and older commercial vehicles.

If you missed it this year, the next Holcot steam working will be the August bank holiday week-end, 2006. See you there - probably in the beer tent!!

*Geoffrey Starmer*

*Look forward to that, the Steaming part if not the beer! Ed.*



#### **Of This and That**

**If you have not booked your place  
for EMIAC 70  
YOU'RE TOO LATE!!  
Deadline was 10<sup>th</sup> September  
You will have to wait to read all about it  
in the next Newsletter  
Sorry!!**

#### **Dates for the Diary:**

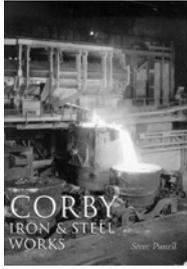
14<sup>th</sup> October: Robert Wharton kicks off with a talk on The New Wellingborough Museum.

21-23<sup>rd</sup> October: The Wonderful Windmills of Lincolnshire. Weekend coach tour based at Lincoln.  
See previous Newsletter (95) for full details.

#### **Writing up the Reports**

Everyone enjoys reading about the talks which are given each month by enthusiastic speakers. All are specialists in their given subject. Could I please ask for five volunteers to write up a short report on each of the subjects this season? Peter and Geoffrey inevitably draw the short straw and it would be a real treat if these two gentlemen could be given a 'breather' this season. Murphy's Law will no doubt say otherwise - but there must be someone out there who would be willing to pen a few words for one of these evenings. I wait with bated breath for the deluge of responses.

## Book Reviews



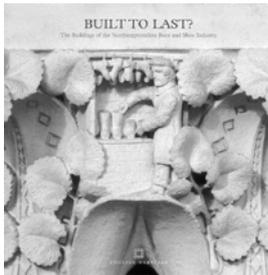
*Corby, Iron & Steel Works* by Steve Purcell.

Tempus Publishing Ltd. £11.99.

ISBN: 0-7524-2769-5

An excellent book of photographs telling the story of the Iron and Steel works at Corby. There is great attention to detail accompanying each photograph and only diagrams are to be found in the whole book. Divided into four chapters the reader is taken through the history of the industry. Not knowing Corby I feel I would have liked a map of some kind to show the area which was covered by the works.

However, having said that I thoroughly enjoyed perusing the photographs and getting the 'feel' of a long gone industry. Excellent value for money.



*Built to Last? The Buildings of the Northamptonshire Boot & Shoe Industry.*

Kathryn A Morrison with Ann Bond. English Heritage: £7.99.

ISBN: 1-873-59279-5

A very readable book all about the buildings of the title. The reader is able to learn through the pages this history of the rise and fall of this industry and there are many excellent illustrations to accompany the narrative. Diagrams show the principle parts of a mans boot, sewing machines, layouts of a typical workshop in a house and a factory. The map at the back

shows the reader the many factories, both large and small, to be found in Northampton itself. The narrative is easy to read without being too technical. The book is also one that I found I could 'dip' into. An excellent read and marvellous value for money.



**Finally:** A story to make you smile.

Mr Watts is Secretary of No.4 Region and he and his ACC, Mr Blore last week attended the meeting. Sgt. Rosemary White, attended in her capacity as Staff Officer.

On arrival at Cambridgeshire Police Headquarters, Mr Watts and Mr Blore strode into the foyer, followed by Rosemary who was carrying the briefcase, briefing notes, supporting papers, cassettes etc. The receptionist was acknowledged with a "Watts, Blore and White, from Suffolk", and the party went straight on down the long corridor before turning left into a side room at which point Rosemary thought - "Oh - a different conference room today".

Just inside Mr Watts and Mr Blore turned around, fixed Rosemary with a stony stare. Mr Blore said "Rosemary, you're a very good Staff Officer and we know you like to be helpful, but I think Mr Watts and I can manage this bit by ourselves".

At this point Rosemary realised she was standing in the gents toilets!

*Ooops!!! - This is a true story from the archives. Names have been changed.*



### **NIAG Committee**

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### **Newsletter:**

Next Issue: **January 2006**

Deadline for all articles and information: 17<sup>th</sup> December 2005. Anything received after this date will be held over to the next issue.

*Article guidelines: No more than 1½ pages long please. Photographs will 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 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.

September 2005



Former BWB workshops, Bulbourne. View from the SE.

Richard O'Rourke report.

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