



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 101 - 'WINTER' 2007

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Having just had one of those weeks when everything just got out of control, I thought I would get on with a somewhat gentler task in finishing off this quarter's newsletter. My apologies for the lateness and also my apologies to Geoffrey who supplied some excellent photographs to illustrate Peter's write up of his talk, and to which I completely forgot to make a note about these photographs. However, welcome to the New Year already we seem to be moving quickly through January and in spite of the recent terrible storms with luck Spring will soon be with us. Autumn turned out to be glorious - the colours when they came were magnificent. Deceptive weather made it difficult to know what to put on and work in the garden was a pleasure. With the change Nutkin the Squirrel arrived - not to use the special feeder - but to sit on the wall and eat the bird's food! Other regular visitors are now including two magnificent Magpies - the colours on these birds are wonderful - iridescent blues and greens depending on which way the sun catches the plumage and of course the many Jackdaws with their constant bickering at the food table.

We had an excellent day at Wirksworth the weather being extremely kind and we look forward to the next which is being held at Boston, Lincs - please see the enclosed leaflet.

We have learned that various schemes in Northamptonshire may be in doubt - one being Chester's Farm. If anyone can give us concrete news about this I would be most grateful to receive it and perhaps report in a forthcoming newsletter.

I see from the papers that Kingsthorpe Book Shop will be closing down in the not too distant future. With this news, the last independent book seller in town will have gone. There seems to be something wrong when publishers can sell books to the supermarkets at a low price and not to book shops. What a sorry state of affairs these days.

Keep sending in items for inclusion to the newsletter - every bit of information no matter how small helps to keep everyone informed - and thanks in advance.

Finally I have to acknowledge a colleague of Terry's who sent us a delightful tongue in cheek tale which I have used as this quarter's 'finally' - do please enjoy it.

Jane Waterfield

SUMMER STROLLS & VISITS CONTINUE

Gretton Church Tower - 5th May

About 20 members ascended St James's Church tower to look at the bells and to see the views over the Welland valley.

The bells were of interest because they were cast locally at Kettering in 1761 by Thomas Eayre II. The Eayre family also made tower and longcase clocks.

The following information has been taken from North's book 1878

S.James - 5 Bells and a Priest's Bell

1. Tinintus Rapidous Scintillans Sparge per Aurus. Eayre, Kettering (Diam. 29³/₄ in)
2. Statutum est Omnibus Semel Mori 1761 (Diam 32 in)
3. Laudate Dominum Cymbals Sonoris 1761 (Diam 32³/₄ in)
4. Crede Resipisce Mori Memento 1761 Morte Beata Nihil Beatius. (Diam 35in)
5. My Sounding is each one to call, to serve the Lord both great and small 1761

Under which is

William Rowell & William Boon CW (Diam 37¹/₂ in)

Priest's bell:

Thomas Norris made me 1636. (Diam 20¹/₂ in)

In 1700 there were four bells (Bridges)

The small bell now hangs in a square cot (surmounted by a ball, vane and weathercock) which is placed on the top of the roof of the tower. The clapper is gone, and it is now the clock-bell.

Tradition says that one of the four bells mentioned by Bridges being cracked they were all replaced by the present ring of five cast by Eayre in 1761, and that he kept one of the bells for the Kettering ring, sending one of the Kettering bells here. This is probably true for the same tradition is told at Kettering with regard to the fifth bell there, which is dated 1630, but which has incised upon it the date 1761. The bell from Kettering was of course recast before it was added to this ring.

These are sweet toned bells, and there is a tradition that when Eayre the founder went into the churchyard to hear them rung for the first time he showed his satisfaction by presenting the ringers with £5.

The bells were rehung in 1870 in a new oak frame.

The Gleaning-bell (4th) is rung during harvest at 8 am and 6 pm and the same bell is rung as the Pancake-bell at 11 am on Shrove Tuesday.

At the Death-knell three tolls are given for a male, two for a female, before and after the knell.

On Sunday a bell is rung at 8 am and for Divine Service the bells are chimed, after which the tenor is rung as a Sermon-bell.

From the 1989 Inventory:

Gretton	S James the Great		Weight		
			Cwt	Qtrs	lbs
1	T Eayre II 1761	29 ³ / ₄ "	5	3	4
2	"	32"	6	1	4
3	"	32 ³ / ₄ "	6	1	22
4	"	34 ⁷ / ₈ "	7	2	24
5	"	37 ³ / ₈ "	8	2	24

Oak frame restored J T & Co 1926

Clock bell Thos Norris 1636 20" weight 1.2.26

Cecil Swann

Scaldwell Ironstone Walk - 7th July

In the first half of the 20th century, the Lamport Ironstone Quarries covered a wide area to the west and south of the village of Scaldwell. Boasting extensive narrow and standard gauge tramways as well as an aerial ropeway, the system lasted into the 1960s.

Very little remains on the ground to show the line of the tramways and nothing of the aerial ropeway which was some 2 miles long. It carried ore from Scaldwell and quarries at Hanging Houghton down to transfer sidings adjacent to the LNWR line from Northampton to Market Harborough in one ton buckets suspended from the ropeway on pylons 400 feet apart. It was built by a German company - Adolf Bleichert of Leipzig - but the construction engineers had to leave hurriedly due to the outbreak of WW1! Nevertheless the ropeway continued in use until 1954.

Our walk began at Scaldwell, the centre of operations for the quarry, where ironstone coming from the quarries near the Brixworth to Holcot road in narrow gauge wagons was transferred to the aerial ropeway. The former loco shed - sheathed in corrugated iron - and a workshop are still evident at the site which is now used by Midland Scaffolding.



Photo © Peter Perkins

Walking along the road from Scaldwell to the A508 we came across one of the parapets of the bridge which took the ironstone tramway beneath the road in the 1930s to access New Bridge Pit. The mortar has survived better than the bricks it cemented together! Further on, both parapets remain for the bridge that took this tramway beneath the A508, close to its junction with the Scaldwell road, although the easterly one is hidden by hedges and undergrowth. On the other side of the road in the field, the top of the brick arch is just visible above the present ground level. Making our way through the hamlet of Hanging

Houghton, we enjoyed wonderful views from the edge of the escarpment. In addition, crop conditions were just right to be able to make out the line of the standard gauge tramway, built to replace the aerial ropeway in the 1950s, as made its way down the slope to join up with the Northampton to Market Harborough railway line. Our walk finished by returning to Scaldwell via a footpath across the fields skirting the edge of the Lamport Hall estate.

The historical information is courtesy of Eric Tonks' Ironstone Tramways of the East Midlands (Part III), which contains photos of the system in operation taken by our President in 1954!

Peter Perkins



Archaeological Excavations at Wicken - 21st July

A warm balmy evening saw a good crowd of members gathering in the Wicken garden of our hosts Cassandra and Leo McNeir. This southern tip of Northamptonshire had been a flurry of archaeological excavations over the summer with a flying visit from television's Time Team and a more protracted dig by members of Cardiff University headed by Dr Richard Jones.

Ben Pears, the site manager, gave us a spirited and informed account of what had been revealed under the lawn of Glebe Cottage.

Initial geo-physical surveys in the summer of 2003 had revealed a mass of possible stone walls including a distinctive round structure. There was considerable speculation that this might be the site of the early medieval manor



Ben Pears speaking to the group. © Jane Waterfield

mentioned in early texts. Trial excavations then revealed the circular remains of a dovecote and nearby buildings showing the signs of non-domestic food processing.

This year's continued excavation of the site revealed more of its history.

The dovecote, which was built in the early 13th Century, had been an imposing structure in its day and would have signified a high status building. Its circular construction was apparently unusual for its date. The lower three feet or so of its walls were still standing and two rows of nesting boxes were clearly visible in the construction of the thick walls. The threshold was still in situ indicating the original entrance facing northwards; this was typical and allowed access without flooding the interior with light which would have disturbed the nesting birds. Considerable discussion was created by the existence of a drain, which crossed the flagged floor and appeared to pass through the wall. This unusual feature might have been for cleaning the interior.



Showing the Dovecote © Jane Waterfield

The other buildings, again 13th Century, revealed a complex history of building, repairs and rebuilding. The existence of fire-reddened hearth may have been the site of a furnace. As there was no sign of pottery sherds or iron smelting it seems most likely that it was for food processing, possibly drying corn or malting barley for the production of ale. Drying or smoking hams or fish might be another possibility.

A large drainage ditch running through the site had caused the

archaeologists many problems, as it had to the original inhabitants who had encountered problems from the waterlogged soil which had made some of the buildings unstable and needing reinforcement. Although this is one of the earliest agricultural/industrial sites that NIAG has visited many members found this a fascinating evening and Ben Pears's exposition an insight into some of the difficulties and puzzles of trying to interpret the past.

The evening ended with animated discussion of the site over a splendid array of cakes and coffee, for which, many thanks must go to Cassandra and Tess.

Jan Fajkus

Great Central Railway, Charwelton - 28th July

The final visit of the summer took place at the end of a very hot Friday when over twenty members made their way to the wilds of the southwest corner of the county.

After a brief introduction to the area and the history of the G.C.R. we took a distant look at the site of Charwelton station. This had been a typical island station with quadruple tracks, the outer tracks for the fast non-stopping trains. The extent of the sidings can be deduced from the fact that as many as 225 wagons were known to have been seen there. These not only contained iron ore to be shipped away, but also brought in cattle from Ireland and the horses and hounds of the Pytchley Hunt. Nothing of the station now remains except for a levelled area of land bounded to the south with the remains of a retaining wall lost in undergrowth and stinging nettles. The Stationmasters house survives near by. Noting the line of the tramway which led from the station sidings up the slope to the iron stone quarries we then drove up the road to the Manor Farm Nurseries. Here we were allowed to explore a series of outbuildings, which had comprised the locomotive depot for the tramway. Two large corrugated iron sheds, in excellent condition, were the forge and engineering work-shops. In the forge the original brick coke forge was still in place, whilst in the engineering shop the bellows were found. The leatherwork was still supple and operation provided ample evidence of the draught that could be provided. No doubt former operatives would beg to differ. The third shed was the much-altered remains of the engine shed. Considerable discussion ensued as to the original construction. A smaller tin shed stood near by and may have been the works rest room.

Two engines had served the quarries in the early 1960's, No 8 Yorkshire Engine Co 784 of 1905 and No 5 Bagnall 2659 of 1942. The quarries closed in November 1961 and after lying abandoned the

engines were cut up on site for scrap in December 1963.

Our thanks go to Mrs Catlin and Mr Catlin for allowing access to the site.

The evening concluded on the rail bed of the G.C.R. We walked north from the station site to the mouth of the Catesby Tunnel. This imposing edifice was built in 1897. Peering into the darkness it was possible to see the light at the other end some 3000 yards away. Retracing our steps in the gathering twilight of a perfect summers evening there were wistful comments on the magnificence of the GCR and its demise in a mere 70 years.

A good picture of Catesby Tunnel can be found at www.disusedrailtunnels@fotopic.net

Jan Fajkus



2006/7 WINTER PROGRAMME

Old Crafts & Industries in Open Air Museums - 13th October

Our President Geoffrey Starmer began this opening talk of the 2006-7 NIAG Winter programme by reminding us of the five stages of industrial archaeology: locate, reveal, record, interpret and communicate. He commented that nowadays it is rare to locate a new site of IA interest, so the emphasis is on the communication aspect. In this respect, seeing the remaining physical evidence is usually the most effective form of communication and there is plenty of this in open-air museums.

Open-air museums are generally one of two types, the first being on-site preservation in which we see the structures in their proper surroundings and context. Geoffrey used the example of Laxey water wheel on the Isle of Man to illustrate this type. In the second type, buildings and machines have necessarily been moved to a new site and grouped together with other structures. The Arnhem Open-air Museum in Holland is a good example. There is a disadvantage with this type in that the buildings are seen out of context relating to their original surroundings. However, moving to a new site can also be an advantage in as much as it may be possible to give the visitor a better view of the structure and process than might have been the case on the original site.

With the aid of 35mm slides, Geoffrey showed numerous examples of the way the main types of IA are represented in open-air museums in both the UK and Europe. A brief selection of these is described below.

Amongst the examples of mineral extraction, the Chalk Pit Museum at Amberley is unusual since the site is effectively a hole in the ground which has been preserved and used to re-erect buildings from other areas. It has proved to be a sensible solution since it would have been difficult to return the site to agricultural use.

At Blists Hill Museum a steam engine is used to demonstrate the principle of raising coal from a mine shaft. However, Geoffrey pointed out that this was not its original use. In fact the engine came from the Milburg Tileries at Brosely where it was used to raise clay from the mine. NIAG members saw it in situ many years ago.

Under farming and forestry, Geoffrey showed examples of restored farm buildings at the Avoncroft Museum which illustrates the problem of moving building from their original site. They are seen out of context and are unrelated to adjacent re-erected buildings. There were also examples of horsewheels at Torup farm, Odense in Denmark, Burrell ploughing engines at the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket and a tanning house at the Zuider Zee Museum in Holland. Here, trees are used to screen buildings of one geographical area from buildings of other areas, so minimising the problem of seeing structures out of context.

Open-air museums often offer the opportunity of seeing old crafts or industries being demonstrated. Geoffrey cited the looms and waterwheel at St Fagans Open-air Museum, where there seemed to be at least one and sometimes three persons working here whatever time of day you visit. At many sites you have to be lucky to go on the right day at the right time (and in some cases at the right time of year) to see a demonstration! For example at the Skansen Museum in Sweden - which claims to be the oldest open-air museum in the world - students are used extensively for demonstrations but come September this source of labour disappears and visitors may be disappointed by the lack of activity.

[Interestingly, members volunteered that that the word Skansen is the name for an open-air museum in both Polish and Czech.]

At some sites, old crafts and industries are being run as commercial businesses. At the Arnhem Open-air Museum, the paper mill from the Veluwe, Gelderland has been re-created and is run as a

commercial concern so visitors are almost certain to see papermaking in progress. Here, artificial watercourses have had to be recreated to put the mill into context but there is a lack of water in both ponds.

At Blists Hill Museum, the GR Morton Wrought Ironworks (named after a founding member of the museum) provides an excellent view for the visitor of a steam hammer being used on a billet of iron; this would have been impossible in a commercial environment.

In illustrating the transport in open-air museums Geoffrey included a picture of the replica of Locomotion No 1 at Beamish, the loco built for the Stockton to Darlington Railway in 1825. He commented at the lack of regard for human safety in these early engineering designs. Health & safety must be a major issue for some museums and must limit the use of machinery and accuracy of demonstrations.

In this detailed illustrated treatise on the examples of IA that can be found in open-air museums, Geoffrey demonstrated in his unique style what a large range of crafts and industries is represented in such places throughout Europe. He emphasised that the use of open-air museums can be both an advantage and a disadvantage in giving the visitor a true representation on the craft or industry.

Peter Perkins



© G Starmer

The Ashby Canal - Past, Present & Future - 10th November

On the evening of 10th November, following the usual concise and quickly conducted AGM, Geoff Pursglove gave a presentation on the past, present and future of the Ashby Canal.

Following an act of 1794, the canal was completed in 1804 and ran from Moira in North West Leicestershire, to Marston to a junction with the Coventry Canal, an original length of 30 miles, although it never did actually reach Ashby. Although the original intention was to provide a link for coal traffic from the Coventry area to the Trent and Mersey system, by the time that the canal was constructed the promoters had decided that servicing local traffic was more important than a through route, and two branches to limestone and coal resources at Cloudhill and Ticknall were added to the plans. However, these crossed much more difficult terrain than the main contour canal which was totally lock free over its 30 mile length, so the branches were actually constructed as early railways, or plateways. Through its lifetime the canal and its various branch lines served no less than 28 collieries, including Ashby Woulds, Newfields, Heath End, Granville, and Church Gresley, and by 1845 the company was running as many miles of railway as it was canal. This probably made it inevitable that the canal company would be purchased by one of the new railway companies, and finally in 1846 the Midland Railway acquired the undertaking, immediately making plans to close down most of the canal lengths, although this was never effected. Coal traffic continued at a quite high level well into the 1900's, but heavy subsidence in the mining areas around Ashby caused particular problems, in some cases causing bridges to sink and requiring empty boats to be weighted down in order to obtain clearance. A bad breach occurred near Moira in 1918, and by 1944 the general situation was so bad that the northern end of the route beyond Moira was abandoned, and the remaining section was

incorporated into the British waterways system upon Nationalisation in 1948. Further sections were closed due to subsidence and lack of use, but in 1966 this resulted in a group of enthusiasts being formed to take action to prevent any further losses and to try to reopen some of the abandoned stretches. By 1968 the 22 miles that remained open were gaining a fair amount of pleasure traffic, although in the years following this, some parts of the already abandoned route were filled in using NCB pit waste, and bridges removed. Commercial traffic still lingered on until 1980 when the last cargo was loaded at Gopsall Wharf.

After many years of effort the Ashby Canal restoration group persuaded the local council to undertake a feasibility study into reopening the abandoned sections of canal, particularly in view of the fact that mining activity had now ceased and land restoration was desirable. The study found that restoration would be possible with some realignment being necessary to counteract subsidence. In the Measham area, realignment was also necessary due to building development having taken place over the canal bed, but it was fortunately possible to utilise a nearby section of abandoned railway trackbed to realign the canal route, although a new aqueduct would be needed to cross a main road.


The first area to be restored was at Moira, close to the 1804 furnace, which was by now a scheduled Ancient Monument, and which provided an ideal focal point for the restoration, along with the nearby Donisthorpe Country Park. Work began in 1994, and two years later was enhanced by the formation of the National Forest Company which aims to create a 200 square mile area of forest around Moira, with funding being provided to the local councils to create a major tourist attraction.

In 1997 the Ashby Canal project was awarded £1 million funding towards the restoration project and a Transport & Works order has been applied for to enable the purchase of necessary land and the associated construction work, and a further £1.6 million of funding is still being sought.

In 1999, the initial restoration at Moira Furnace basin was completed together with a few hundred yards of canal, and in 2001 the canal was extended still further north to terminate at Bath Yard basin, passing through a newly built lock. Extensive leisure facilities have been developed at Moira and Conkers Waterside, and regular boat trips and other attractions regularly take place there. This restored area is however several miles away from the nearest navigable portion of the original canal route which now terminates at Snarestone. However there are ambitious plans are to reconnect this with the restored section point and to establish further new leisure areas en route.

Geoff illustrated this fascinating talk with a selection of views of the canal and its adjacent areas, in particular some very evocative “before and after” sequences showing just how certain places had either completely changed in appearance, or in some cases not changed at all. It will be interesting to follow the project as it proceeds and it would certainly make a attractive venue for a future NIAG visit.

Barry Taylor



Miscellany of items of interest

Noted from the Chronicle & Echo of October 24th 2006 : It was reported that part of Pearce Leatherworks in Wellingborough Road, Great Billing, which is a grade II listed building may be demolished to make way for flats. The factory closed in 2001 due to growing competition from overseas and since then the buildings fell into disrepair. Plans submitted met with opposition from English Heritage, the 20th Century Society and the Ancient Monuments Society, who were concerned about the loss of the important building. According to planning experts the buildings were in such a poor condition the only alternative was for partial demolition.

Does anyone have any further information about this project?

Noted from Towcester Informer of November 2006 : In October an archaeological dig was to commence on the Mount with a hope that ancient Roman roads and buildings might be unearthed. The first phase commenced in the summer when the site was cleared of trees and bushes. It was hoped that more roman roads and buildings would be discovered between Watling Street and the Roman Town wall that cuts across the east side of the site. Formal plans to regenerate the Moat Lane site have not yet been agreed, but may become part of a development with a riverside walk, shops and cultural facilities.

Current Archaeology - Issue 207 : informs us that Piddington Roman Villa (Roy and Liz Friendship Taylor) has won the Mick Aston Award for the best presentation of an archaeological project theme to

the public. Piddington has been sustained for some 27 years since the initial season of excavation. There is a huge finds collection and a vast archive of data. The local chapel was purchased and converted for use as a museum and research facility, this being manned by volunteers over weekends.

Noted from the Chronicle & Echo of December 10th : A £2m museum tracing the County's history back to prehistoric times could possibly be built on the site of the former Billing Goods yard near Billing Aquadrome. Steven and Robert Hollowell are the driving forces behind this scheme and have a large collection of items which could be put on display. These have been collected over many years, their father was an archaeologist. Other items include a large collection of old agricultural machines and a collection of some of the earliest radios. Roman Jewellery and coins are also amongst their collections. Northampton County Council are due to look at plans during January and already the scheme has been given strong backing from the Councillor representing East Hunsbury.



ADVANCE NOTICE OF A SUMMER TRIP

Saturday - 9th June 2007
Boots Manufacturing Site and
Ruddington Framework Knitters' Museum
Nottingham

Boots factory

Construction of Boots' manufacturing site outside Nottingham commenced in the late 1920s and continued into the 1930s; the vision was to build a huge new manufacturing plant that would incorporate the very latest ideals of industrial production. We will be visiting the D10 'Wets factory', a grade 1 listed building, where items such as creams pastes, shampoos and medicinal products are manufactured. The visit will last about 2½ hours.

Ruddington Framework Knitters' Museum

We will visit a unique complex of listed frameshops and outbuildings arranged around a garden courtyard, together with a former chapel in which many of the knitters worshipped. The site has been restored to show both living and working conditions of the framework knitters throughout the 19th century.

We will have the services of a guide to explain the operation of the machines.

This is an independent museum, so there will be a small charge.

Advance booking is essential. Numbers are limited to just 20 - so please get your names to Jane & Terry on 01327 312850. Full details will then be supplied with each booking.



Diaries: Late 19th century

I was recently given some diaries by the widow of a farming friend of Oliver's for onward transmission to the Record Office.

They cover the years 1895, 1896 and 1898. They are in several hands, and record the activities of a transport business in Northampton. The owner seems to have worked from the Peacock Hotel in Northampton, which he decided to sell in 1896. The 1894 Kelly's directory lists Samuel Frisby as living at Bedford House in Bedford Place, Derngate. He is also listed as a livery stable keeper at the Peacock Hotel yard, a jobmaster at the Hotel, and the Midland Railway receiving officer at 28 Market Square, which is also the address of the Peacock Hotel. There were stables at Bedford House, and presumably he ran his business from there after the sale.

The entries relate to purchase and repairs of various vehicles, trade in horses, and the renting of pasture for their use, and the buying of fodder for them. There are also several records of accidents, both to vehicles and rivers, and occasional references to a worker being drunk.

Many types of carriage are named, often with a description which may indicate the maker, or the source. The Daventry brougham; old parcel van and a new parcel van from Hull in September 1896; landau; Victoria carriage; wagonette; Bevan coach; London Mourning Coach.

An omnibus, bought of Mr Higgins of Wellingborough for £16-5-0d.

24 Dec 1895 - bought of Mr Hull, Gold Street, a Black painted Brougham. Gave five pounds and Wetherall old Brougham in Exchange.

16 Jan 1896 Irish Chestnut Mare kicked in Ambulance with Sam

23 July agrees with Wilson & Hull to put patent glass into the hearse

12 Sept. bought from J Hollingsworth "our Weel Carriage" for £3-15-0d, and a glass sided hearse

23 October a second hand landau brought from Hull for £30

15 June 1898 Wilson & Hull agree to take Old Coach Body and Ironwork connected with it and hansom And to Build New Brougham and to find sufficient Cloth to trim it For the sum of £52-10/-.

The 1894 Directory lists John Hollingsworth, carriage builder at 64 Abington Street, and Wilson and Hull, carriage builders at 34 Gold Street.

Funerals generated business, and sometimes a body was collected from the station, presumably where a local person had died elsewhere. Some dates for local balls are listed, but whether this was because of carriage hire, or a social engagement is not clear. In 1898 he was master of the Pomfret Lodge, and lists visits to other Masonic lodges.

Most of the repainting and varnishing was done by Hollingsworth, and this was a regular maintenance expense. At the back of the first two diaries are monthly cash payments, but no indication of what for, except £13 a year for telephone.

On 26 January 1895, the Daventry brougham, driven by A.Day and returning from Little Houghton, was in collision with the Bedford Mail. In the following February, when Maidwell Hall was burnt down an engine, four horses and a cart were sent.

Susan Ranson



Hats off to the Feltmakers

Until recently I had always thought that Luton was the centre of hatmaking in Great Britain. A visit to the 'The Hat Works' or Stockport Museum of Hatting proved otherwise. When Christine and I visited with a group we were fortunate to have a first class guide who brought alive the history and processes of hatmaking. He demonstrated and explained the early manual processes and then showed us the mechanised processes with the aid of typical machines. Quite clearly towns in Lancashire were the first to develop the industry of hatmaking using felt. Luton became famous much later for hats made of straw.

The skills of making both felt and hats were introduced to this country by Huguenots from France. They fled their homeland in thousands because as Protestants they were persecuted by the Catholics. These religious asylum seekers came to England and settled here permanently. They brought a

number of skills with them including feltmaking which was then a manual process known only to a few.

In a book entitled "The Huguenots" published in the 1870's Samuel Smiles wrote "*Hatmaking was one of the most important manufactures brought into England by the refugees. In France it had been almost entirely in the hands of the Protestants. They alone possessed the secret of the liquid composition that serves to prepare rabbit, hare and beaver skins. They alone supplied England and Holland with fine hats. After the Revocation (of the Edict of Nantes which allowed the reoccurrence of their persecution) most of the hatmakers went to London, and took with them the secret of their art, which was lost to France for about forty years. During this period, all the French nobility, and all persons making pretence to dress, wore none but English hats. Even the Roman cardinals got their hats from the celebrated manufactory at Wandsworth, London, established by the refugees*". Hatmaking required little capital outlay on equipment and yielded a very good income. In 1661 Samuel Pepys noted in his diary, that a beaver hat had cost him 45 shillings, a considerable sum in his day. The craft of feltmaker and hatmaker were mutually dependant, the former produced hoods, a sort of conical felt hat which were finished and styled by the latter.

The process that hatters had to master, usually through an apprenticeship, was briefly as follows. The coarse hairs were plucked from the beaver pelt that was then brushed with a solution of nitrate of mercury to raise the scales on the fur shaft so that they would lock together firmly, a process known as "*carotting*". The fibres were then cut from the skin and taken to a special bench in a draught free area of the workroom known as a "*hurdle*", over which was suspended a hatter's bow, like an oversized violin bow seven feet long, strung with catgut. The fibres responded to the vibrations of the bow under the control of the craftsman, by separating and spreading evenly until they had formed into a thick but loosely structured mat of material known as a "*batt*". Several batts were then shaped into a cone, reduced by boiling and "*planked*" or rolled by the craftsman, wearing special leather mitts, until a hood of firm, dense felt had been formed. It was then dyed and stiffened with shellac. At this point the hood left the feltmaker and was sent to the hatter's for blocking into the desired shape for the current style, lining and finishing. If some of these processes were carried out in poorly ventilated rooms, the mercury could damage the brain, hence the expression "*as mad as a hatter*".

Our visit was of special interest to me as my ancestor Antoine Teulon (c1660-1740) was a Huguenot Feltmaker who fled from France and settled in Greenwich, London 1689. Six other members of the Teulon family became hatters having been apprentices for seven years from the age of fourteen. Some became members of the Feltmaker's Company in London. Antoine's son Anthony Teulon was apprenticed to Melchior Wagner who was hatmaker to King George 1. Antoine's grandson Melchoir Seymour Teulon provided the hats of John Wesley and his followers.

The story of hats is fascinating and I recommended a visit to the Hat Works in Stockport not just to find out about hat making but also to see how hats have been worn through the ages.

Alan Teulon



Of This and That

Annual General Meeting: There was an excellent turn out of members to the Annual Meeting of the Group and it was pleasing to note that there was no change to the existing committee members. All were willing to stand for the next year and all were voted back in. Please also note that subscriptions remain the same for the next financial year. Costs are to be closely monitored between now and the next AGM (2007) when it may be that there will be a small increase for the 2008/9 subscription year.

Winter Programme 2006/07: Meetings are held at *The Garden Room, St Matthews Church Hall, off Kettering Road, Northampton* and start at 7.30 pm. Look forward to seeing you then.

The remaining talks are:

12th January : Members evening

9th February : Dovecotes - Colin Ray

9th March : A Corner through 100 Years - Joy Holmes

Dates for the Diary:

4th May - NIAG's summer programme commences. Make a note and watch for details with the next mailing. As always the Committee are putting together an excellent, varied programme with something, they hope for everyone.

12th May - Industrial Heritage Day - Boston, Lincs - please see enclosed leaflet.

TV Programmes:

BBC2 : Flog It with Paul Martin - Most afternoons - 3.45 pm : Ongoing

ITV: Waterworld - Thursdays at 7.30 pm - 10 programmes commenced 4th January.

Channel 4: Time Team - Sundays early evening - 13 programmes commenced 14th January.

Channel 4: The Search - Sundays at 8.00 pm - 7 programmes commenced 7th January: Reality Game show with a difference. Lots of history in wonderful locations such as India, Italy, France etc.

Channel 5: Megastructures - Mondays at 7.15 pm. Repeat programmes

Northampton Museum needing assistance

Further to our note in the last newsletter I have here a few more details about the 'Best Shoe Forward: The Shoemaker Remembered' project. [Ed]

Northampton Museum and Art Gallery are currently running an oral history project documenting the shoe industry in Northamptonshire from 1945 to the present day. The project is a regional initiative to record the memories of the people working within the shoe factories and offices at that time.

This project is being funded by the East Midlands branch of the Museums Libraries and Archives Council in a bid to make the regions collection of industrial machinery more accessible to the communities of Northamptonshire.

When faced with the numerous books of the subject of shoemaking in Northampton, it is amazing to believe that very little has been recorded since the end of the Second World War. Yet we are in a situation where vital information is at risk of being lost to the future generations.

They would like to hear from everyone from the machine operators to the managing directors who were employed in the industry between 1945 and the present day. All memories and stories are valuable.

The recordings will be archived for future generations learning about the history of shoe manufacturing. It is also planned to use these recordings to compliment the Museum's machinery collection, to make the history of industrial development more exciting to the younger audience and to add a more human contact to the overall exhibition.

In addition to participants sharing memories, the museum are also looking for enthusiastic people to help collate the wealth of information that is out in the community. They are looking for the hidden jewels of knowledge that will determine the development of shoe manufacturing from the 1940 to the present day.

If you are able to assist, then please contact Francis Nielsen at the Museum. 01604 838111 or e-mail fn Nielsen@northampton.gov.uk.

Francis Nielsen

Books of interest.

Members who attended the village walk around Finedon may remember the Victorian yards, terraces of brick cottages around central courtyards of which only a few examples remain. Finedon Local History Society has now published an illustrated book detailing the history and life in the many yards that once stood in the village. A fascinating example of local social history.

Finedon's Yards : Edited by Malcolm Peet.

Published by Finedon Local History Society.

ISBN 0 955140 0 6

Phone Malcolm Peet on 01933 680773 for price and availability.

The Vernacular Workshop: from craft to industry, 1400-1900 - Edited by P S Barnwell et al.

The workshop as both a building type and as a workplace.

Published by The Council for British Archaeology 2004 price £17.50

ISBN 1 902771 45 1

All Saint's Church, Northampton

We have been approached to ask our members if they can help with information regarding the historical background of the above Church. Any information is sought including that about the fire and the original extent of the Church site, and possibly the cellars. (understood to extend way into what is now the Market Square and half way down George Row).

If you have anything about the above, I would be very pleased to receive it and pass it on to the appropriate person. Many thanks.

Ed



Lastly for a smile

The Danger Within!

NEW YORK: A public school teacher was arrested today at John F Kennedy International Airport as he attempted to board a flight while in possession of a ruler, a protractor, a set square, a slide rule and a calculator.

At a morning press conference, Attorney General John Ashcroft said he believes the man is a member of the notorious Al-gebra movement. He did not identify the man, who has been charged by the FBI with carrying weapons of Maths Instruction.

“Al-gebra is a problem for us” Ashcroft said “They desire solutions by means and extremes, and sometimes go off on tangents in a search of absolute value. They use secret code names like ‘x’ and ‘y’ and refer to themselves as ‘unknowns’, but we have determined they belong to a common denominator of the axis of mediaeval with coordinates in every country. As the Greek philanderer Isosceles used to say, ‘There are 3 sides to every triangle’.

When asked to comment on the arrest, President Bush said, “If God had wanted us to have better Weapons of Maths Instruction, He would have given us more fingers and toes”. White House aides told reporters they could not recall a more intelligent or profound statement by the president.



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Newsletter:

Next Issue: **April 2007**

Deadline for all articles and information 20th March 2007. 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 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 and don't forget to put a caption with them.