



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY  
GROUP

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NEWSLETTER



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## From the Editor

It has been a very tough few months in this household and if this 'note' sounds a bit vague or not quite with it, then please bear with me.

After the past few months of rain and damp it is with a gladden heart that the sun shines and one of the loveliest times of any year - autumn - is now upon us. We were in Wales a short while ago, some of the trees starting to turn golden and autumnal whilst others still stood proud with their coats of green. Soft gentle mornings with a bit of a haze on the mountain tops and gloriously hot on the lower parts.

We have just about put together a programme for a Wales trip next year and have just a few more areas to explore before putting pen to paper to tell you about what we have planned. We hope to finalise the programme by January and this will be published in the next issue - so watch out for the announcement.

The summer walks were well attended and even the rain did nothing to deter from meeting and enjoying a walk or a visit. We move towards the Winter programme of talks and again there is a good mix on offer. The AGM also beckons and details of this are enclosed with this mail shot.

Enjoy the Autumn and we look forward to seeing you either at St Matthews or at the Heritage Day.

*Jane Waterfield*



## SUMMER VISITS & WALKS

### **Grand Union Canal - Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May**

Aided by an exceptionally fine evening, a good crowd of members attended the first visit of the summer programme. The aim of the meeting was to look at the junction of the Grand Union Canal\* and the Northampton Arm, which despite the proximity of the Northampton-Towcester dual carriageway, has seen remarkably little change in nearly 200 years.

The Grand Junction Canal was built to join London to Birmingham and the Northern canal system. This was an ambitious project, 137 miles in length, with 166 locks and a number of lengthy tunnels. Part of the original plan was to provide a side arm to link the main canal with Northampton and the navigable River Nene.

The Northampton Arm was built under the terms of the Grand Junction Canal Act of 1793. Work finally started in 1812 and was completed in 1815. During the interim a temporary tramway provided overland carriage of goods. The Northampton arm runs from Gayton Junction 4.75 miles to the Nene near Bridge Foot. 17 locks were required to accomplish the 109 foot descent, 13 locks forming the Rothersthorpe Flight.

James Barnes surveyed the Northampton Arm in 1796 and estimated the cost of the work at £25,349. Benjamin Bevan, engineer of the Junction Canal Company, supervised the work.

The NIAG walk started at Gayton Junction where we were able to admire the fine toll keeper's house and the adjacent workshop yard and wharf. This complex has changed little since it was built and provides a good example of Georgian industrial canal architecture. A group of cottages that had stood on the northern bank have now disappeared although it is still possible to make out the remnants of the gardens.

Next to the wharf stands the much-altered house that was built for a member of the canal company.

Walking on the towpath down hill towards Northampton we passed Gayton Marina. Now much enlarged, the marina was built in the clay pits that provided the clay for puddling the canal floor. A little further on we noticed the overgrown hard standing and corrugated iron buildings that had been the Regent Oil depot.

Walking on we reached the much renovated lock keeper's cottage commanding the top of the Rothersthorpe Flight. This is the only remaining cottage when originally there had been several. A little further on, standing on a typical brick canal bridge, we were able to see the locks descending towards Northampton before retracing our steps back to the cars.

*\* The Grand Junction Canal became the Grand Union Canal in 1929 due to amalgamation of a number canals in an attempt to improve financial viability.*

*Jan Fajkus*



Quiet reflection

© Jane Waterfield 2008

Member Mike Constable goes on to add.....

Not being sure whether I would be able to attend the Walk around Gayton Junction on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, I had not done my homework properly so asked nearly as many questions as everyone else. Having now had time to consult other people, I now have the answers to some of those questions.

The eagle eyed members of the group will of course have noticed that although we started at Bridge Two and walked towards the Junction first there was no sign of any Bridge One. It seems likely that there was a bridge at the Junction, but when that was widened out, probably around the time that so much work was carried out in that area of the Northampton Arm, ie 1911, this bridge disappeared. The most likely scenario is for it to have been a fairly narrow swing bridge, allowing horse traffic across it to link the towing paths as the road bridge opposite is not a turnover bridge whereas the previous northwards bridge on the main line is. Most of the group missed seeing this bridge as they were unable to use the car park owing to it now being kept locked. The 'Navigation' Public House at the Junction closed in 1953.

Moving back from the Junction, the Group passed the expanding Marina. Although difficult to spot now, this was originally a clay pit for a brickyard on the site which is believed to have been one of the sources for the building of Blisworth Tunnel.

The corrugated iron buildings originated in 1931 as the wharf for the traffic from the Pool of London in Russian Oil Products. This ceased (for obvious reasons!) in 1940 and various organisations have made use of the buildings since that time, including Stocks Engineers and Watson Petroleum.

Sandlandings may be slightly wrongly named as it was a loading wharf for several of the sand pits, on both sides of the canal, in this immediate area. Latterly it was used as the base for a fleet of rowing boats which could be hired for taking to the water. What looked as if it might have been a small arm was in fact the remains of a slipway used to put these small boats into the canal.

The Winding Hole near the top lock is of recent date, within the last ten years. The reason for it is not immediately obvious but it may have been a result of the road widening which affected the line of the canal a little below where the walk reached as there was a winding hole part way down the locks. It is very unusual in that it is built on the towpath side and not on the off side, but I understand it is very useful for the boats delivering coal to the Lock Keepers cottage by that lock as it saves a very difficult reversing movement back to the marina to turn.



The other side!

© Mike Constable 2008

## **Grand Union Canal, Crick - Friday 13<sup>th</sup> June**

A 'select' group of members met outside Crick Post Office on what turned out to be a fine evening after the earlier rain to explore the 'Old Grand Union' Canal in the vicinity of the village. The canal was opened in 1814 and links the River Soar at Leicester with the Grand Junction Canal at Norton Junction, via Foxton locks.

We initially followed the footpath from the post office across the fields to join the towpath near to the northern portal of Crick Tunnel. The tunnel itself is 1528 yards (1397m) long and is brick-lined throughout but with neither towpath nor ventilation shafts. There are 10 distinct mounds of excavated material from the construction of the tunnel, in a straight line between the two tunnel mouths that show its line on the surface.

Walking northwards along the towpath we passed Crick Wharf adjacent to bridge number 12, the latter carrying the A428 West Haddon to Crick road over the canal. The wharf was once a canal settlement with limekilns, coal wharf and the Grand Union public house, now a restaurant. In the 1950s British Waterways transferred its piling depot to the wharf from Blisworth Mill and during this period concrete piles were cast in the buildings and moved out into the yard on trucks running on a rail system.

On the north side of the A428 is the much extended Crick Marina and it never ceases to surprise me how many boats are berthed in such places. It is a good job not all owners want to take their narrow boats onto the canal at the same time!

Further on, we left the towpath to ascend Crack's Hill around which the canal had to make a wide diversion. At an altitude of almost 500 feet, this hill offers commanding views over the nearby countryside and we were able to observe the route of the canal from the tunnel northwards towards Yelvertoft. We couldn't miss the vast area of sheds forming the DIRFT (Davenport International Railfreight Terminal) site to the north and west of Crick, nor the large bulk of Rugby Cement Works in the distance.

Returning to our starting place via the well kept canal towpath, reminded me that the last time NIAG walked along this stretch of the canal some 20 years ago, the towpath was a virtually impenetrable jungle!

*Peter Perkins*

Information sourced from '*The Old Union Canals of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire*' published by The Old Union Canals Society, 1982



## **Harrington Airfield - Friday 20<sup>th</sup> June**

Members met on the Lamport to Harrington road at the Carpetbaggers Memorial which commemorates the American squadrons and support units that occupied this

WW2 airfield. The road at this point formed part of the perimeter taxiway and was built directly onto the original concrete foundations. Digging through the wide verge still exposes the concrete taxiway, which was of course much wider than the current road.

A quick drive took us around the southern perimeter, now the road down to Draughton. Again it was possible to discern the wider concrete taxiway extending beyond the modern roadway. We then proceeded on foot along the western perimeter. This is still a wide concrete road made up of reinforced concrete slabs bordered on its western edge by broken up cabling ducts. To our left we could make out the remains of the firing range. A high brick wall banked with earth on the one side. Was this used for testing aircraft guns, as there are shackle points in the concrete where aircraft could be anchored during tests?

Eventually we arrived at the earth banked blast shelters put up during the recommissioning of the airfield as a Thor missile site. Cutting across the rough ground it was possible to visit one of the launch sites. The concrete infrastructure is still clearly identifiable. A concrete base on which the missile was stored horizontally. The rail seating bolts, which allowed the protective housing to be rolled away. A series of bolts which held the base on which the missile could be raised to the vertical. The base was flanked by concrete lined pits which held the propellant tanks, oxygen on one side and fuel on the other, and pumping gear. Massive "L" shaped blast walls, which protected the mobile ancillary vehicles. Various unidentified conduits, trenches and pits were also visible.



© Jane Waterfield 2008

Harrington airfield was built by American Army Engineers for the RAF who took it over in November 1943. It was used as an operational training unit flying Wellington bombers based at Desborough. In May 1944 the airfield was handed back to the Americans who used converted Liberators to drop agents and equipment into Europe. Some 1774 successful sorties were carried out in 1944 dropping 415 agents and over 31,000 packages. In September '44, 60 Liberators were stripped down and flew over 800,000 gallons of fuel to airfields in France and Belgium to support the rapid advance of the allied armies. In the closing months of the war US flown Mosquito aircraft flew at high altitude picking up weak radio

signals from agents inside Germany. Adapted A-26 Invaders were also used to drop agents into Germany. Within two months of the end of the war in Europe all American personnel had left Harrington and returned to the US.

During the period from late 1959 to August 1963 Harrington became a Thor Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile base. Three missiles on above ground launching pads were deployed by crews manned 24 hours a day 7 days a week. 65 feet long and 8 feet in diameter the Thor missile was liquid fuelled with a range of about 1700 miles. The missiles were put on standby, raised to the vertical ready for firing, at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962

*More detailed information about the History of Harrington Airfield is available at [www.harringtonmuseum.org.uk](http://www.harringtonmuseum.org.uk)*

*Jan Fajkus*



### **Stevington Mill - Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July**

Fifteen NIAG members gathered at the mill, owned and maintained by Bedfordshire County Council, situated on the south-east edge of the village. It was a wonderful summer evening and the small post-mill glowed in the sunlight. We



General View © Tony Johns 2008

started by considering the difficulties in harnessing the wind compared with the way in which water power was utilised, namely the more or less straight-line direction of the wind's force has to be converted to a rotary force to turn the milling machinery; the wind in this country (and most of the rest of the world - Afghanistan is one of the few exceptions!) can come from any direction; and it cannot be shut off.

From quite early times it was realised that the force of the wind in one direction could be used to move a boat in a different direction by the use of a sail whose surface was inclined to the wind direction. This principle was used to produce rotation using sails of the form than we saw on Stevington Mill, namely a rectangular wooden framework (the sail) across which cloth sheets could be drawn. Because there were no cloths on Stevington mill's sails, we had some discussion as to how

the cloth was pulled across each of the four sails by several ropes when rotation was required, and how the cloth was pulled back when rotation was not required.



It was pointed out that unclothed sails could still catch the wind and rotate so that a brake on the shaft carrying the sails was necessary.

Stevington Mill is an example of a post-mill where coping with the changes in direction of the wind is achieved by supporting the whole weight of the sails, windshaft and machinery on a vertical post on which it could be rotated. This was the earliest form of windmill to be found in Europe and originated in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. We entered the brick-built round-house (which makes no contribution to supporting the mill but was a later development to provide a weather-proof storage space for grain and flour outside the fairly cramped (as experienced when all fifteen of us were in there) space inside the mill. Within the round-house we could see the massive timber structure supporting the post which extended up through the floor of the buck (the wooden building carrying the sails, windshaft and milling machinery). Emerging from the round-house we looked at the tailpole extending from the bottom of the buck to just above ground level. This was used by the miller to push round the buck so that the sails would face into whatever direction the wind was coming from.

Then we climbed up the 20 steps of the mill and manoeuvred ourselves through the door into the buck. Stevington Mill is quite small and once inside we could see the crown tree which sits on top of the vertical post and supports the buck and its contents. Going up a further flight of steps we were in the top of the mill where the windshaft entered the buck. It carried a very large wooden wheel (the brake wheel) with wooden cogs protruding from its face. Around its circumference the wooden brake blocks were tight on to the wheel, their position held by a double lever. The wooden cogs engaged with a gear on a vertical shaft which drove the upper (or runner) stone of the single pair of stones in the mill. The bed-stone was fixed in the floor but the set-up was not complete since there was no wooden horse with hopper and shoe to feed the grain into the eye of the upper stone.



The 'tentering gear' that controls the separation of the two millstones dependent on the wind speed and hence the speed of grinding. © Tony Johns 2008

Descending to the lower floor of the buck, there was much discussion of a fly-ball governor which, through a multiple system of levers, altered the height of the runner stone above the bed-stone. The fineness of the flour produced depended on the speed of rotation of the upper stone and the gap between the stones. If the speed of the wind varied the governor automatically altered the gap so that gap x speed of rotation of upper stone was always constant. Having sorted this out, we then descended by the steps to the ground, having first done a half turn as we stepped out of the mill to get our feet on the steps!

Our visit helped us to appreciate the inventiveness of earlier times where the different aspects of variation in the wind were tamed to give a useful form of power and could be controlled all by one man. Our thanks go to Bedfordshire County Council for maintaining the mill and making the arrangement whereby we collected the key from the “Royal Oak” to which the majority of our group retired to continue our discussion.

*Geoffrey Starmer*



### **Heygates Mill, Bugbroke - Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July**

The rain held off whilst 14 members gathered outside the model bakery at the Mill. Adrian Covington gave an introduction to the Mill and its businesses: not only Heygates but also two other mills and a bakery which provide the rolls for one of the fast food outlets. The mill handles something like 10,000 tons of corn a week. By the time the introduction was over both parties managed to find shelter in one of the buildings to start their tour.

Echoes of Boots came in the guise of dressing up in white coats (too small) and head coverings in the shape of miller’s caps. Ear plugs were also provided and thankfully used throughout the tour.

My group started with the flour mills and we were taken into the new mill built circa 1990 which is capable of handling 10 tons an hour. Four break mills tear the corn apart in stages to produce the different components of the flour; between each mill the flour is sieved and returned to the appropriate mill for further grinding. Samples from each stage were shown to us and then ‘tossed’ onto the floor. In the next room two giant



Samples of flour.

sieving machines sieved the output from the mills and directed it to the next stage in the process. Then we moved on to the older mill built circa 1970 which handled 6 tons of corn an hour following a similar process to that already seen, but with smaller machines. And finally we were shown the oldest mill handling 4 tons an hour built in 1941 after a fire. What joy and how gentle this part of the Mill was

with all the machinery driven by leather belts from overhead line shafting. Although noisy it was far more gentle on the ears than the previous two mills.



From here we were taken across the yard into the animal feed stock production area, passing the giant 'trunk' used for taking samples from the incoming deliveries. This part of the business manufacturers feed stock for farm animals and managed wild birds such as ostriches and pheasants. A variety of raw materials are brought in such as beans, peas, soya, maize, sugar beet pulp, and oil seed rape pressings the latter two being waste products from the sugar beet and rape oil seed production processes. These are analysed for their energy and nutritional content and mixed to provide the required characteristics of the feed stocks. We were shown the weighing and mixing

areas before moving on to look at the four presses that produce different sized pellets. We were surprised to hear that they can add medication to any of the mixes according to a vet's instructions; this medicated feed stuff can be produced within 24 hours.

Finally we paused to enjoy watching the conveyor belt taking the sacks of feed stock to being loaded onto pallets.

*Terry Waterfield*



### **East Anglian Rail Tour - Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July**

Our first attempt at this tour in 2007 was thwarted by an unfortunate derailment near Ely which caused sufficient damage to a bridge to close the line for over six months.

This time however, we were more successful and seven NIAG members gathered at Stamford railway station for our inaugural railtour. Car parking was easy and also free, and the 08.57 train to Ely was on time. Our journey began with an unexpected and different view of Burghley Park as we left Stamford, and continued into the busy Peterborough North station, where the skyline which was once dominated by the cathedral, now showed the signs of other religions. Passing under the main line to Kings Cross we had a glimpse of the 'Railworld' site which is the headquarters of the Nene Valley preserved line, and then the site of Peterborough's first station (East) which once served the lines to Northampton and Rugby. Soon we were entering Fen country, with the landscape taking on a much



Stamford Station - The way ahead. © Jane Waterfield 2008

flatter profile, and also passing the remains of the once extensive brick making industry near Whittlesey. March station showed a few signs of its onetime importance as a major junction and freight centre, but much of the station is now derelict and the sidings overgrown. More remote fenland took us on towards Ely, with the first glimpses of the cathedral on the right hand side when we were still some distance away from the city. Several members commented that, although they had visited Ely on many occasions, the railway approach gave a totally different aspect of the cathedral, and many had not realised where the station was actually situated. Ely station was our first change and was the usual hive of activity, with trains continuously arriving and departing, including some freight traffic. The station coffee bar was also excellent and did a brisk trade whilst we waited for our next train to Ipswich. This train was fortunately rather less crowded than our first and we were able to find seats together at the rear of the train, with the coach almost to ourselves (which was perhaps just as well). A lively journey ensued across rolling countryside through the Newmarket area, Bury St Edmunds, and Stowmarket, until the outskirts of Ipswich were reached, where an unusual large wooden industrial building on the left hand side caught our attention.

Lunch was taken at Ipswich, where we had a break of an hour and a half, and members wandered in different directions to see something of the town and in particular its 'historic waterfront', which is now quickly changing its character and being developed into the inevitable apartments and bistros. Back at the station we looked rather apprehensively at the crowds awaiting the Liverpool Street to Lowestoft train, and our fears were realised when a rather short train arrived. Fortunately we all managed to get seats, but by departure time the train was literally heaving with passengers, including many backpackers, and double baby buggies. Pleasant river scenery was passed en



Ipswich Harbour buildings

© Jane Waterfield 2008

route to Woodbridge, and as we continued on along the East Suffolk line towards Saxmundham and Halesworth, the train gradually emptied. This line alternates between double and single track, and progress was rather sedate, but after calling at what seemed to be a large number of small isolated stations we eventually arrived at Lowestoft, the most easterly railway station in the UK. This is another station that shows few signs of its former glories as a major junction and freight centre, although there were extensive views of the quays and boatyards as we approached. There was just time to walk across the lifting bridge leading to the harbour (which had just lifted!) before we returned to the station and rather surprisingly rejoined the same train, which now formed the service to Norwich. This portion of the journey was of course through typical Broadland landscape, with views of many fine windmills, swing bridges, and boats apparently sailing along through fields.



Sails in the crops

© Jane Waterfield 2008

More river and boatyard scenes followed at Brundall, and we were soon on the outskirts of Norwich, with its extensive railway infrastructure and maze of junctions, before arriving at Thorpe station, the only survivor of the town's original three stations. We then had a choice of two trains for the next leg of our journey to Ely, but this was just as well as one of them was showing as 'cancelled', the only time during our day when the railway system caused us anxieties. However, at least we had an alternative, and there was just time to examine the architecturally interesting exterior of the station before joining an understandably rather crowded train. We called unexpectedly at several smaller stations, in the first stages of our journey, but this also had the effect of emptying the train quite quickly, and we were soon passing through Wymondham, and onwards towards Thetford. The stations along this early line are notable for their interesting architectural style, with much use of knapped flint, and some fine and varying decorative ironwork in the platform canopies. The landscape also changed from agricultural to Breckland as we approached Thetford, with extensive forests alongside the line. Also noticeable was the sheer number of level crossings that were passed, both in station

areas and also in the middle of the countryside. The landscape gradually changed again after Brandon and Lakenheath, this time to a typical fenland character, heralding our approach to Ely once again, this time from the east. After another short pause, some train watching, and more excellent coffee, our final train took us back to Stamford where we arrived on time at 18.15 after almost 300 miles of fascinating rail travel. It was encouraging to see just how well used most of the trains were, and how busy locations such as Ely, Ipswich, and Norwich still are, despite the number of lines that have been closed throughout East Anglia over the last forty or fifty years. What the day also proved was that the best way to really see a landscape, is to travel through it by train, rather than by car.



One last coffee before the last train of the day  
© Jane Waterfield 2008

The weather was kind to us, the trains all ran to time, and the party was well behaved (well almost) Perhaps there will be another one next year.....?

*Barry Taylor*

Other thoughts on the trip.

A phone call before the trip from Barry to share a car was most welcome and we set off up the road to Stamford having learned that there had been yet another report of ‘an incident’ somewhere near Stamford.

For once it was enjoyable not to have to worry about whether trains were late or on time as this was a trip without deadlines - except of course the catching of the next train. The whole day was extremely pleasant, in good company and thankfully warm and dry. The number of people on these trains, which were not mainline, surprised both Terry and me. I watched in horror as a lad got on the train en route to Lowestoft complete with extremely large back pack and who then managed to nearly knock a mother over as he swung around to take the thing off. At Oulton South a huge group of young people got off, complete with backpacks, sleeping bags, wellies, you name it they had it. Speculation amongst us was rife - but it was too late to ask one of them we were off for the last lap to Lowestoft.

Lowestoft had a definite ‘sea-side’ feel - end of the line - and tantalising whiffs of the sea in the air. I never realised that Norwich was a terminus and this again had

a different feel to it, unlike Ely which was a 'through' station. We did get outside to look at the architectural aspects of the Station before going back to join the throng for our last lap of the journey back to Ely.

I, for one, enjoyed not having to worry about what time we got back, thoroughly enjoyed the company, and gazing out at the scenery as we glided past. Horses, people, railway crossings, bridges, mills, boats, industrial yards, etc. The list is endless.

Thank you Barry for organising with such precision a most interesting and enjoyable day. One which we will treasure for a while yet.

Jane Waterfield



### **Blisworth - Friday 18<sup>th</sup> July**

Despite the usual threat of rain, around a dozen members gathered in the car park of Blisworth village hall for a look at the railway and canal heritage of the area.

After negotiating the new traffic calming road layout, we left the village along the Northampton road, in the process discovering a 'new' second-hand bookshop, which may repay further exploration. At the northern outskirts of the village is to be found the magnificent railway arch, spanning what was the Northampton turnpike, later the A43. This was constructed in 1838 for the London and Birmingham Railway, and is still in use today, apparently having been little modified during the intervening years despite the much increased weight and speed of the modern trains. Also close by was the site of the first Blisworth railway station, situated high up on the embankment, but this was only a temporary establishment, used until a new station was provided further along the line where the 1845 branch to Northampton and Peterborough was situated. The two villas situated on the corner of Station Road were not, as suggested by local legend, a part of the station, but were actually speculatively built for Lord Grafton to advertise the building stone available from his nearby quarries.

After following Station Road for a short distance and crossing the Grand Union canal, we arrived at the site of the second Blisworth station, of which very little now remains. The station originally consisted of two parts - the 1845 London & Birmingham station on the main line, and the adjacent Northampton and Banbury Junction (later 'SMJ') station opened in 1866 for the service to Towcester. Close by is the Blisworth Hotel, although now renamed, and for many years in the early twentieth century this was a popular local leisure venue, with extensive pleasure gardens and pools. Today the hotel continues in use, but the gardens have become a 'park home site', and even the old road leading from the station area to the Gayton road has been realigned to allow for the new flyover of the modern A43 bypass. At the junction with the Gayton road, the layout has also changed considerably, and now passes behind the pair of railway cottages provided in 1914

for SMJ employees. The bridge over the old SMJ line has also disappeared, and a grassy track is all that remains of the line here, although by looking over the fence in the direction of Blisworth station, the remains of the SMJ turntable pit can just be discerned in the undergrowth. The electrified West Coast main line still passes under the lane to Gayton, but the bridge is much altered and restricted to light traffic only. Continuing down the hill away from the railway, we passed the very new Gayton Marina, now home to many narrow boats, and joined the canal towpath close to Gayton Junction, to continue the walk back towards Blisworth village. After a short while we passed the remains of the railway overbridge which carried the Northampton branch, closed during the 1960's, and then under the West Coast main line which is carried above on an original iron bridge now encased in strengthening concrete, although some of the original construction is still visible on the underside. Also at this point was once a decorative water tower and pumphouse which served the railway.

Continuing along the towpath, and under Station Road, we passed the sites of several ironstone tramways which terminated on the canal side, although there are few remains to be seen today. Candle Bridge was passed, and then the old A43 bridge, alongside which is the renovated Westley's Mill, now modern apartments, and the old 'Sun Moon and Stars' public house. The towpath continued, with signs of the Blisworth Hill railway visible on the opposite bank, and finally, the mouth of Blisworth tunnel was reached and the party left the towpath in the gathering gloom and returned to the village past the old Blisworth Stoneworks premises. This completed a somewhat lengthy but interesting walk, with much of 'IA' interest. The walk rather neatly linked in with other recent canal walks from Gayton Junction, and Stoke Bruerne, and now all that remains for next years programme is a walk through Blisworth tunnel to complete the sequence!

*Barry Taylor*



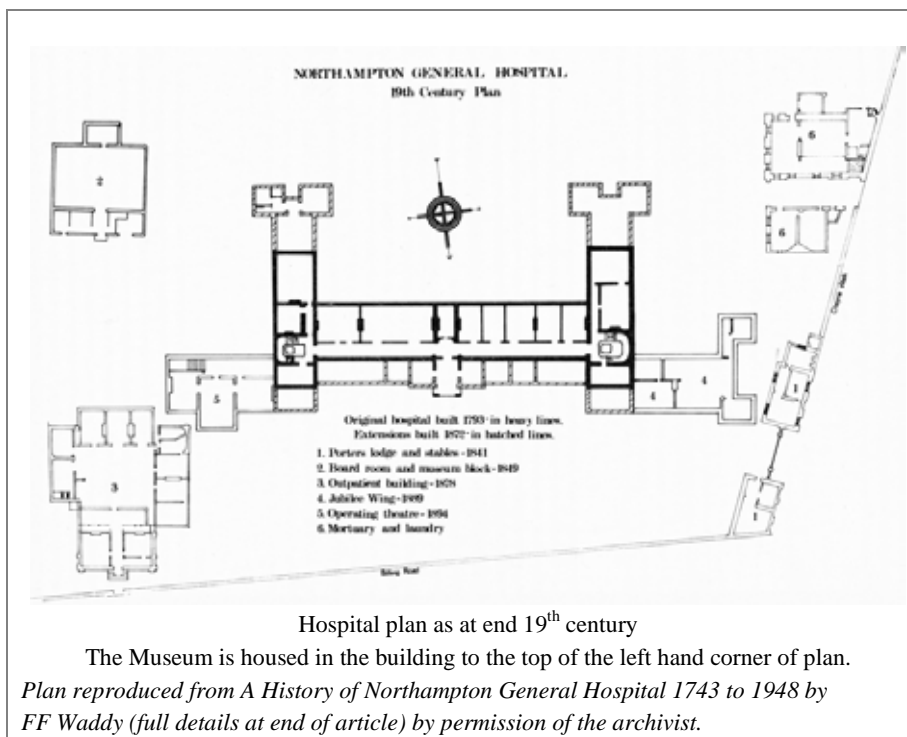
### **Northampton General Hospital Museum - Friday 25<sup>th</sup> July**

There was an excellent turn out for our last visit of the summer season on a glorious warm sunny evening. Having been met by Sue Longworth, the archivist of this museum we set off for the long trek through the hospital to the Board Room in the original buildings which now house the museum, library and archive.

This has been converted into the Museum with large display cases full of hospital artefacts - pumps, stethoscopes, the early form of oxygen mask and cylinder (you know the sort, huge tanks and rubber masks), syringes - you name it there seemed to be a sample. Around the walls were the portraits of the men and women who had been at the forefront of setting up the General Hospital way back in 1793.

Although St John's Hospital in Bridge Street had been established in 1138, it was abolished c.1535 by Henry VIII leaving no provision for the sick. John Rushworth, a Northampton surgeon, wrote a letter to the *Northampton Mercury* in





December 1731 suggesting that Parliament should establish a hospital in every county. Some 12 years later a Dr James Stonhouse came to Northampton and in July 1743 also wrote a letter to the Northampton Mercury advocating the establishment of a hospital. A subscription list was soon opened and in December of the same year a large house in George Row was rented at £30 per year. The Infirmary was opened in March 1744. Even though the house next door had been purchased in 1782 to provide a total of 70 beds, demand still exceeded available bed space - indeed even the administrative quarters were cramped for space. By 1790 the Governors were asked to consider building a new hospital in a more convenient location. Eight acres of land was purchased from the Rev. Walter Griffiths of Gayton for £1,000; it lay in Northampton Fields outside the old town ditch. As there was no road access to the site, the Governors paid £40 to have a road laid from St Giles. The new hospital was opened in 1793 - Northampton General Hospital had arrived.

We were welcomed with a cup of tea or coffee with biscuits and free to look at the exhibits and archive material which had been laid out for us to peruse, before sitting down to hear Sue talk about the Hospital, the archive and what was planned for the future. We were also introduced to Dr. Andrew Williams, one of the curators, who was, and is, instrumental in getting this museum and archive looked

after. We learned that a few people had literally stumbled across these items as there had not been any indication that this wealth of artefacts existed.

After which, we split into the inevitable smaller groups and went off to look at the extensive library, which was above us. On the way we passed many photographs and more artefacts of the original hospital before it was expanded to its present size in the late 1990's.

Amongst the books in the archive was an almost full set of all the Lancet Journal. We understand that this is one of the last almost complete collections in the country and that Oxford is to 'get rid' of most of theirs. It could be argued why keep such a collection, well if it goes then there will be no record in the World left of such importance to the medical profession. The publishers of the Lancet are offering to provide on-line access to all issues of the journal 'in perpetuity' for a one-off payment of £146,000.

The Museum is open on Wednesday mornings for those with an interest in all things medical. If you are interested in old photographs, ancient remedies, old documents these are also well catered for.

This visit was one of our earlier starts and we finally left the building some two hours later, well impressed with what the Hospital Museum Trust are trying to do.

Ref: Waddy, F.F., A History of Northampton General Hospital 1743 to 1948, (1974), Northampton and District Hospital Management Committee, ISBN 0 9503572 0 0.

*Terry & Jane Waterfield*

*Please note. To all those who attended this evening Sue Longworth says a big thank you and has asked it be known that through your generosity we donated £30.50 towards the conservation process.*

*Visit on any Wednesday morning - but telephone first to check if they are likely to be in on the day you chose to visit.. 01604 544868 (Wednesday morning only).*



## Miscellany of Items of Interest

### **Group rail travel in 1883**

Report of outing on 17 July for employees of P. Phipps & Co's who "gave the holiday, as well as providing tickets to the exhibition and a certain sum of money for each workman.

A train labelled "P. Phipps & Co's private special" left Bridge Street Station at 7.20 a.m. with 400 passengers from Northampton Brewery and proceeding by way of Blisworth there took up eighty employees at the Towcester Brewery. Nine from Daventry completed the party, who then proceeded straight to Addison-road

station, Kensington. After visiting the Fisheries exhibition, various parts of London were visited by different small parties, some making excursions to Greenwich and Woolwich. Two special trains took the men from Euston, one starting at 9.30 p.m. more especially for the convenience of the Towcester people; and the other at five minutes after midnight.”

*Northampton Mercury 21 July 1883 Sup. 16*

In October there was an excursion to London by “the employés (*sic*) engaged in the various iron factories in Northampton. Operatives from the whole of the establishments in the town participated in the holiday but the principal firms represented were Messrs. Rice & Co, Mr. Mobbs, Messrs. W. Allchin & Co, Messrs. Allchin and Linnell and Messrs. Stenson & Co. Nine hundred workmen and their wives and families were conveyed in two trains by the Midland Railway to St. Pancras. Fare 3s. 6d per head.”

*Northampton Mercury 13 October 1883 Sup I 7*

#### WW2 Control Tower under threat.

A Second World War Two control tower at Ibsley near Ringwood, one of the only wartime towers left in the country, is thought to be under threat of demolition after listed status was refused by the government on the grounds that ‘*it does not have sufficient architectural or historic interest in a national context to merit listing*’. Apparently English Heritage recommended it be listed in 2006. The Bournemouth & West Hampshire Water Company, which owns the site, says it has no plans to threaten the control tower’s future. The two-storey tower, which featured in the 1942 propaganda film *The First of the Few*, has been derelict since RAF Ibsley closed in 1952. The RAF Ibsley Historical Group, who have campaigned for 10 years to restore the building, have vowed to continue fighting to save it.

*Hampshire IAS Newsletter - July 2008  
taken from Southern Evening Echo, 27.3.08*

*The base opened in February 1941 and was home to 19 different Squadrons. In June 1942 the base was handed over to USAAF control. It returned to the RAF control between Dec.1942 and Jan 1944 with the USAAF using it until July 1944. For a year it became a training base until all flying ceased in October 1945 and then back to agriculture late in 1946. Only the Control Tower remains in a poor condition.*

*The above information has been taken from an excellent web-site: [www.wartimemories.co.uk/airfields](http://www.wartimemories.co.uk/airfields).*

*Further information about other Wartime memories, airbases, allied forces, books etc. can be found on this web-site.*

Still on the theme about the RAF:

A former RAF site near Staverton used for communications during the Cold War is up for sale.

RAF Whitmill Hill, off the Badby Lane, is being offered for sale by formal tender by the Defence Estates at the Ministry of Defence. The 0.71 hectare site consists of a communications tower, a building and other supporting equipment along with a redundant Boxer communications building. The site was developed around the time of the Second World War and the mast was used by the USAAF as part of its digital European backbone in the 1970s and 1980s. The DEB system has since been replaced and the site is now unused.

*Daventry Express: August 14<sup>th</sup> 2008.*



## **Of This and That**

### **New Committee Members required.**

November sees the Annual General Meeting of the Group. The Committee are seeking two enthusiastic members to join them. Please contact Peter Perkins if you are interested. Details on the back inside cover.

### **Winter Programme**

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 10 <sup>th</sup> October  | The Royal Train - 166 years of progress - Chris Hillyard                                  |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> November | Annual General Meeting<br>A Brief History of the Kettering Iron & Coal Company - Mick Dix |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> December | The Grandfather in your Parlour - Andrew Adamson  |
| <b>2009</b>               |   |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> January   | Members' Evening.   |

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

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 17/19 <sup>th</sup> October          | CBA Weekend event in London. Details: Sophie Cringle, CBA Marketing & Events Officer, CBA, St Mary's House, 66 Bootham, York, YO30 7BZ - 01904 671417                    |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> October<br>Saturday | Heritage Day (EMIAC) - Wellingborough. A joint venture between NIAG and NALH with the Wellingborough Archaeological & Historical Society doing the hosting.              |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> November            | NIAG Annual General Meeting at 7.30 pm.  |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> November            | CBA East Midlands - The Forest of Sherwood. To be held at Cuckney Village Hall. Details Daryl Garton, 12 Collingbton Street, Beeston, NG9 1FJ or daryl@dgarton.plus.com. |

### **Did you know?**

There were 35 million people recorded in the 1911 England & Wales census.

6 is the number of years since the government announced its plan to digitise birth, marriage and death records.

Before 1870, the median award in a breach of promise case was £275 - in today's money that's about £18,000.

There are 57 Royal Naval Officers recorded in TNA's online collection.

There were 35,000 enumerators employed to collect the 1911 census.

65% of all railway excursion day-trips leaving from Birmingham in 1876 went on a Monday.

In 1901 2,452,500 letters were sent, over 100,000 more than the previous year. A letter still cost 1d!

85 million documents were accessed at the National Archives in 2007.

6.9 million people watched the first episode of this year's TV series Who Do You Think You Are.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more than one third of workhouse inmates in England were over the age of 70.

*Taken from the Who Do You Think You Are magazines August to October 08.*

### **From other publications:**

According to the Sunday Times Travel section Dubai has a mega-resort hotel based on the Lost City of Atlantis. Therefore, Atlantis in big numbers:

The cost: £750m

The size: 114 acres - or 64 Wembley football pitches

The rooms: 1,539, with prices starting at £228 per night for a standard double and rising to £15,000 for the Bridge Suite.

The water: 60m litres, including the rides and aquariums - enough to fill 24 Olympic size pools

The rides: 8, including the 1 ½ mile river ride

The restaurants: 17, three from Michelin-starred chefs

The fish: 65,000 specimens, twice as many as the London Aquarium.

*The Sunday Times: 27<sup>th</sup> July 2008*

New age of the Canal by numbers:

4,000 The approximate year BC when the world's first canal was built in Egypt

37 Acts of Parliament were passed in just two years for the construction of canals from 1793

5,000 The number of miles of canals in the country at the height of the boom

- 40 Tons of coal could be carried by one horse-drawn barge  
200 Pence per person per week is the amount we pay in tax to maintain the waterways  
54 Thousand jobs are supported by canals and rivers

*The Daily Mail - Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008*



### **And Finally:**

#### **The end of the QE2 as we know it**

If you get the opportunity to see the QE2 in Southampton or the Solent before her final departure in November, take a very good look - because if you ever get to Dubai, where the ship is destined to retire, chances are you won't recognise it. Information which has come to the editor of the Hampshire IAS newsletter, says that the well-known funnel will be removed to provide an entrance and replaced by a glazed penthouse. The engines and propellers are to be removed, and two additional decks will be constructed. The ship is also to lose all her lifeboats and davits.

However, the most alarming information is that the fixtures and fittings - including all of the paintings and models - which the purchasers insisted should remain in the ship, are to be auctioned off in Dubai. Some of the paintings were specially carried out for Cunard and many others are valuable works of art. It is believed that there are oil paintings of Princess Elizabeth with the Duke of Edinburgh and one of the Queen Mother which used to be on board the old *Queen Elizabeth* and were given to the City of Southampton upon her retirement. The city then LOANED them back to Cunard to put on the QE2. The editor has heard that the City Council asked for them to be returned but were told they were on Permanent Loan so, in effect, tough - you're not getting them back. Two security guards patrol 24/7 to check everything.

American-owned Carnival Cruises, to which Cunard was sold some years ago, is throwing away our heritage.

*Taken from Hampshire IAS newsletter July 2008.*

*I strongly suspect that as per usual it is money that is talking and hang the heritage. This is happening all over the country and the majority of the public don't care until its too late and the few that do are laughed at for caring.*



### **NIAG Committee**

President: Geoffrey Starmer, 34 The Crescent, Northampton,  
NN1 4SB

Chairman & Secretary Peter Perkins, Eastfields Farmhouse, Manor Road, Rushton,  
Kettering, NN14 1RH

Treasurer Jan Fajkus, 101 Holly Road, Northampton, NN1 4QN

Web site: Jan Fajkus as above

Members: Steve Miles, Barry Taylor and Terry Waterfield

### **Newsletter Editor**

Mrs Jane S Waterfield, 6 Bakers Lane, Norton, Daventry NN11 2EL  
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### **Newsletter:**

Next Issue: **January 2009**

Deadline for all articles and information **20<sup>th</sup> December 2008**. 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 via e-mail - black & white if possible - compressed to make it faster to download and please give information about the photograph. Photographs/slides sent by post (first class) 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.