



# NORTHAMPTONSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

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## NEWSLETTER



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Photograph front cover: Plaque on a station passed during the Rail Tour of  
the Midlands  
© Jane Waterfield 2009

## From the Editor

It was with something akin to irritation when finalising details for the last visit of the summer programme. A visit to Stotfold Mill, which at first had seemed so promising, became a total nightmare. In order to visit there was a number, or was it a number? then there was the food scenario. No details at the outset of enquiries should have set off alarm bells - 'we will get in touch shortly to send you menus etc.' was the answer to one question posed when asking about details and setting dates. First it was 'yes we can cater up to 20 persons', then it was 'we have to have 20 persons minimum'. After which it was downhill all the way. Money to visit was requested up front hence the almost panic like request in last quarter's issue. Then, horrors - I was told that in order to visit they had to have 20 persons in order for the visit to proceed. What was it now - 'it's not fair on our volunteers if we don't have this number'. Hell's bells. Thankfully, for me, **they** pulled the plug when I said we only had 15 - I say thankfully, I didn't have to do the plug pulling and can have the moan I have just had. A friend, who was going to join us and who lives in the village, could not believe the stupidity of turning away a potential visit, she also felt that the Mill were somewhat shooting themselves in the foot at being so persistent in their number for a visit. However, for your interest only, I will attempt to give you a brief history of the Mill, courtesy of a guidebook purchased a year ago.

The summer visits and walks, other than the abortive Mill, were again excellent. The weather, at times, managed to let us down, especially on the night of the walk in Northampton - a second attempt at the canal walk in Far Cotton. The visit to the Brickworks near Aylesbury was a success - it is hoped for a return visit next year so watch out for details in next year's programme. Wales was also successful, sorry that some of you could not make this trip, but it is hoped to run another week roughly at the same time in 2010. Thanks to everyone who organised these trips and visits and here's to next year's programme, and, no, we will not be attempting to visit that Mill!

A proposed trip to a Cricket Bat maker is being arranged for January. Please see information on page 11.

Please also turn to page 17 for notice about the payment of subscriptions in the next few months. Many thanks and we look forward to seeing many of you at the winter talks.

*Jane Waterfield*



## SUMMER PROGRAMME WALKS AND VISITS 2009

### **Titchmarsh Mill - 5<sup>th</sup> June**

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June found 23 intrepid members at Titchmarsh Mill near Thrapston which is the home of the Middle Nene Cruising Club. They use the mill as their club room and bar etc. Geoffrey Stamer provided handout sheets from the Northants. Mills Survey showing a brief history and description of machinery.

The mill was of three stories with a single undershot waterwheel at the river end and miller's cottage at the other. The cottage was two stories plus loft. There were numerous buildings dotted around of similar vintage. The site has had a mill since pre-domesday book, however it was not obvious of the age of the existing building.



Titchmarsh Mill

© Jane Waterfield 2009

The normal working system of this type of mill was to hoist the unground grain up to the third floor where it was fed to specific grinding wheels according to grain type and proposed used. (Unfortunately the floor was not safe enough for access to this level). The grain fell down the wooden box like shutes to be fed into the millstones in a controlled manner. As the grain was ground this was collected, bagged and lowered to the ground floor for dispatch.

The remains of the waterwheel could be viewed and when we were taken into the ground floor inside the mill where the club's electrician had set up lighting, we could see how the horizontal drive from the wheel was converted to vertical and the power was split off to individual vertical shafts to drive the grind wheels sets on the floor above. In this area was a large gear wheel which we were able to examine to see how the construction allowed the apple wood teeth to be replaced when worn or broken. It is understood that apple trees were grown on site for that purpose. Whilst in the ground floor area various scribblings were discovered on an overhead beam. A lot were indecipherable but two entries read:-

“John Pashler - died Feb 26<sup>th</sup> 1925” (this man was recorded as ‘miller and farmer’ between 1903 and 1924 according to Geoffrey’s survey).

‘T Rowlett left Sept 1946’

We then proceeded through the adjacent cottage, upstairs into the clubroom and bar area where portholes had been built into the wall enclosing the workings, which were illuminated so that the machinery could be viewed showing the five grind wheel positions.

In summing up the visit everyone agreed that by adapting the building for a practical use it preserved it for organisations such as ourselves to see and enjoy but also kept vandals and developers away. It had been a very enjoyable evening by the Nene and we left, returning it to its centuries old peace and tranquillity.

*Ron Hanson*



### **West Midlands Rail Tour - 24<sup>th</sup> June**

This year almost twenty members gathered at Northampton station for the second annual NIAG railtour, and we were once again favoured by good weather for our journey around the West Midlands. The first leg took us through Rugby, where



Detail of lamp on  
Atherstone station?

© Jane Waterfield 2009

some members joined, and on up the Trent Valley main line through Nuneaton, Atherstone (with some interesting original Livock station architecture), and Stafford, before branching off at Norton Bridge to join the North Staffordshire railway routes to Stoke on Trent. More original architecture was noted at Stone, and Stoke station retained much of its features together with an overall roof. Continuing via Kidsgrove, we reached Crewe, where some time was available to ‘refuel’ and observe some of the workings of this busy junction.

We continued back down the main line as far as Stafford again, and then diverged on to the Grand Junction Railway Birmingham route. At Wolverhampton the signs of West Midland industry began, with the sight of the part-derelict Springfield Brewery and the old Great Western Railway station at Wolverhampton Low Level now in the throes of redevelopment into residential and commercial use. Much more industry and canals were encountered between here and Birmingham New Street, with just a fleeting glimpse of the Galton Bridge at Smethwick as we passed by.

A walk across Birmingham city centre took us to the authentically refurbished Moor Street station, partly original and part newly built when the Snow Hill line was reopened by Chiltern Railways. A rather tortuous and noisy journey then took place on antiquated rolling stock, around the north western corner of Birmingham, until we alighted for an hours stop at Kidderminster. Here we were pleasantly surprised to find the adjacent Severn Valley Railways station 'dressed' for the forthcoming 1940's weekend, and we were also able to see the arrival of a steam worked train from Bewdley, and visit the Museum.

Our onward journey should have comprised a short hop to Worcester Foregate Street station, followed by a return to Birmingham along a different route via Bromsgrove and the celebrated Lickey Incline.



Metal flags at Rowley Regis.

© Jane Waterfield 2009

However, fate took a hand and on our return to Foregate Street after a short stroll, we found that not only was our intended train running about ten minutes late, but it was also to travel to Birmingham back along the route through Kidderminster that we had just used ! In a scenario typical of 'Reggie Perrin' points failure at Kings Norton had dictated a rerouting of the train, and we eventually crept into New Street station with just a couple of minutes to catch our connecting train to Northampton. Amazingly, most of our party did somehow manage to scramble aboard the train, although a few preferred to wait just twenty minutes for a guarantee of a seat on the next service, together with your tour organiser and two other stalwarts who had been combing the busy station for any stray members !

Despite Railtrack's last ditch attempt to derail our day, overall it proved a most enjoyable trip, and a complete contrast to last years East Anglian tour, at less cost and with perhaps a more convenient starting point for most members.

Now..... what about next year? Mutterings were heard on the train about Paris - suggestions on a postcard (or email) please!

*Barry Taylor*



### **Collyweston walk - Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June**

Despite rain on and off over the county during the day, the extreme north-east remained dry throughout and nine intrepid souls were rewarded with a pleasant evening's walk, exploring the area around Collyweston, famous for its history of stone slate production.

Collyweston slate is basically a sandy limestone which cleaves into thin slates under the action of frost. It was used as a roofing material from Roman times; for example records show that Rockingham Castle was roofed in Collyweston slate in 1375. The stone was mainly obtained from shafts sunk some 8 to 10 metres through limestone to reach the Collyweston sandstone layer which ranged in thickness from a few centimetres up to 1 metre. Horizontal galleries were driven through a loose sandy layer lying below the sandstone, workmen lying on their side and using a foxing pick. The roof was temporarily supported on stone props until the blocks of stone called 'slate logs', could be levered away. The slate logs were mined during December and January and had to be kept wet until the temperature fell below freezing. After exposure to several nights of frost, the logs could be cleaved into slates and dressed.

There was extensive mining activity from medieval times, with slate being obtained from around Collyweston, Easton-on-the Hill, Wothorpe, Ketton and as far away as Deene. The peak of activity was between 1715 and 1730 but production declined in the 1850s when the introduction of railways meant that Welsh slate could be obtained more cheaply. There was a revival in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries but the last quarries in the Collyweston area closed in the 1970s although it is claimed that slate logs can still be obtained from Collyweston Quarry on the south side of the A47, east of the A43 near Duddington.

Our walk began in the village outside the 'Collyweston Slater'. Sadly the photos and displays of the history of Collyweston slate which once adorned the walls of this pub, have all gone. We walked along the A43 towards Easton-on the Hill, noting the dry stone walls and the road named 'Slate Drift', reflecting the local history. Although most of the land mined around Collyweston was returned to agriculture soon after the slate was extracted, an area known as 'The Deeps' remains unrestored to the north-east of the village and is now an SSSI. We traversed this area which is now just a series of grass covered spoil heaps, although some deeper cuttings remain around the edge which we conjectured were probably remains of later open-cast quarrying.

Reaching the track called Ketton Drift which doubles as the long distance Jurassic Way footpath, we made our way down into the Welland Valley to the medieval bridge taking the Collyweston to Ketton road over the river. We returned up the hill to the site of Collyweston Palace built by the mother of Henry VII in 1486. Contemporary accounts suggest that it was carpeted and glazed and had a dungeon, as well as apartments for rich and poor. The Palace went out of use in 17<sup>th</sup> century and the site was bought by the Tryon family who built a new house, although that was demolished by 1778 and the site converted to paddocks. The only significant remains on the site is an enormous sundial built into a wall some 15 feet high. The sundial is often quoted as being all that remains of the royal palace but the Rockingham Forest Trust\* suggest it is 18<sup>th</sup> century and is all that remains of the Tryon residence.

\* For further information on Collyweston slate and the Royal Palace, see the Rockingham Forest Trust Heritage Resource Centre website - [www.rockingham-forest-trust.org.uk](http://www.rockingham-forest-trust.org.uk)

*Peter Perkins*



### **Kettering Furnaces walk - Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July**

This walk followed on from Mick Dix's talk to NIAG about the Kettering Iron & Coal Company in November 2008 (see Newsletter 109, p4) and Ron Whittaker's presentation during the Members' Evening in January of this year on the role of Avenue House in Rockingham Road Kettering as the Furnace Manager's house (see *Newsletter 110, p3*).

Our walk began at Avenue House, now known as SATRA House and from 1946 until recently the headquarters of SATRA Technology Centre. The premises are still owned by SATRA but now let out to a range of local businesses. We examined the house, originally built at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but virtually doubled in size with a westerly extension dated 1914. We were able to identify the extent of the two phases of building from the different types of brick. In the garden we saw that the steps up to the lawn were made of furnace refractory bricks, notable for their shape in the form of a truncated wedge. Some of these bricks carried a number cast into the surface. Mick Dix informed us that these were to denote for which layer in the furnace lining the brick was intended, as each layer required a slightly different shape\*.

Walking further round the site we looked at the former stable block, now a staff canteen, which Mick Dix informed us was constructed in 1906, far earlier than expected. We also examined the wall between SATRA House and Rockingham Road which again displays two different types of brick, indicating that the grounds were extended to the south, probably when the west wing of the house was built.

Walking down Furnace Lane, we came upon the site of the reservoir constructed for Kettering Furnaces, now covered in houses along with the rest of the eastern flank of the Slade Valley at this point. Passing underneath the Midland mainline, we noted that the tunnel beneath the line was in three distinct parts - the original 1857 section in the middle, the section to facilitate the 1880s quadrupling on the east side and the roughly contemporary section to take the ironworks sidings on the west side. Further on we came across a single abutment for a bridge over Furnace Lane. This took the lines from the Midland Railway into the furnaces and is the only furnace related structure remaining on the site, the rest being covered by modern industrial sheds.

*\*Reporter's note: I have to confess I had never noticed these bricks before and I worked at SATRA House for more than 40 years!*

*Peter Perkins*

*My thanks to Ron Whittaker, Mick Dix and Roger West.*



### **Long Buckby walk - Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July**

Another wet evening meant that only seven hardy souls gathered in Long Buckby to look at the industrial remains of this small town. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries Long Buckby had become a centre of weaving and woolcombing but this trade had disappeared by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the place only recovered from poverty when the boot & shoe manufacturing industry arrived in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1913 there were at least 9 boot & shoe companies operating in the town, by far the largest being that of Frederick Cook who employed some 200 people. He built a modern single storey factory with impressive classical frontage at South Place about ½ mile down Station Road in 1903 but sadly this was demolished some ten years ago. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, outworking was common in the shoe industry in Long Buckby and a number of single and two storey outworkers' workshops remain in various parts of the town.

Our tour began on the Market Place where a house built for William Saunders remains together with its elaborate ironwork decoration. His so-called 'American Shoe Factory' was erected close-by sometime in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where the Costcutter supermarket now is. William Saunders was responsible for a great deal of innovation in footwear retailing including travelling repair shops, providing boots in 4 width fittings and providing a half pair of soles with every pair of boots. In 1881 he was awarded a medal at the Frankfurt Exhibition for his 'Electric Ped' boots which were intended to banish malformation caused by badly designed footwear.

West of the Market Place, in King Street stands the former Castle shoe factory. Alfred Howe constructed the main building between 1886 and 1890 and it was still in use as a shoe factory until the 1990s when it was converted into offices. Fortunately the original iron window frames remain, making it an attractive remnant of the town's industrial history.

Walking down West Street, we passed the former gasworks house, built for the manager of the Long Buckby Gas Light, Coke and Coal Company which was established on the site in 1860. Further down West Street just beyond the mill but on the opposite site of the road, our member Mike Constable pointed out the truncated remains of a cast iron gas lamp-post set into the wall. It still has the words 'LONG BUCKBY GAS' cast along its length, the remaining words of the company name presumably hidden below the ground surface.

Upper Murcott Mill lies on the south side of West Street. In addition to having a 20 foot diameter water wheel (as least it did in 1857), this mill also had a steam engine, the base of the chimney of which is still visible from the road and is in the process of being covered by a small pyramidal roof! On the opposite side of the road, in an open-fronted shed amongst the trees of the local nature reserve are the remains of a small waterwheel pump which was moved here from Foxhill Court (on the road between Long Buckby and West Haddon) in 1990.

Retracing our steps eastwards, we looked at two unusual cast iron gravestones in the churchyard. Nearby, the Assembly Rooms were part of shoemaker William Saunders' empire. He was keen on temperance and his 'Independence Band' rehearsed there before playing in locations such as Liverpool, Manchester and London where Saunders had retail outlets. Further on Mike showed us the two-storey shoemakers' workshop at the back of his home on 'The Banks'. We looked at this during our last visit to Long Buckby in 1999. The workshop dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first floor would have been used as the workshop with storage and lavatory of the ground floor.

Our final visit on this wet evening was to the site of Long Buckby Castle, a motte and bailey constructed during the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*Peter Perkins*

*(My thanks to Mike Constable for additional input.)*



### **Stotfold Mill - cancelled trip of the 1<sup>st</sup> August.**

Since the 15 or so members were unable to visit, see editor's ramblings in preface, I will make no apologies for 'lifting' information from an excellent little history by Bert Hyde on the Stotfold Water Mills.

There were once four water mills in the village of Stotfold. Newnham Manor Mill, The Brayes Manor Mill, Randall's Mill and Taylor's Mill. Of the four only two remain. Taylor's Mill is now a private residence. Randall's however is the Mill which has now been fully restored. Confirmation that these two mills survived was shown on a map of 1765. The other two, Brayes Mill ceasing working sometime before 1707 and Newnham some time before that in 1519.

Whether Randall's or Taylor's Mills were known at Stotfold Mill is still up for debate since both could lay claim to being so by virtue of different documents. Randall's was noted as being Stotfold Mill in the Post Office directory of 1869 and on delivery note headings from a John Randall from 1876 onwards. However, Taylor's Mill could have been Stotfold Mill as it was so named on the sale document of 1795 and the same is true of maps dated 1806, 1826 and OS maps of 1834/72 and 1884.



Stotfold Mill

© Jane Waterfield 2008

The history of Randall's Mill, it being copyhold, as opposed to Taylor's being freehold, can be traced back through the manor court books. A James Sander surrendered the mill in 1694 and John Guilberd was admitted and held it on a herriott of 25s and an annual rent of the same amount. There is a gap in the history since the next entry tells us that in 1770 a Francis Smith, was owner, and was in danger of losing his mill. A letter to him from a William Bennett explained his rather precarious position at the mill. It came from London and was dated 25<sup>th</sup> December 1770.

“This is to inform you that though a stranger to me you may expect to be involved in trouble by law in a very little time except you can find the means to avoid the suit you will certainly have young Woodward lay claim to your mill by virtue of a deed and surrender dated 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1739. In the deed Wm. Gilbird of Lemsford who owned your mill bound himself in a bond of £250 to pay to Jane Gilbird for 30 years the sum of £10 per annum and on her death to pay to her administrators £120. She has since died and the deed is now in the hands of her grandson Mr Woodward. You will find him very troublesome as he wants your mill to live in. You bought the mill from Mr Dawson but as Mr Woodward's surrender is prior to that which Mr Dawson bought the mill from Thorp you will find his title in law will stand good before yours unless you pay him £120. He has had the advice of a number of first class lawyers and they give it as their opinion to be high right. Now he has sent to the steward of the court to know when there will be a court day that he may come and deal with the matter. Should you require it you may depend on my assistance at any time. You can get in touch with me by leaving a letter at the General Post Office in Lombard Street”.

The Woodwards and the Gilbards were obviously related and had owned the mill for a long time. However, the affair may have cost Francis Smith £100 because in the year following the letter from Wm Bennett, an entry in the court books of October 1771 informs that Francis Smith surrendered conditionally to Mrs Mary Twydell which was discharged upon payment by Francis Smith of £100. When Francis Smith died in 1781 he was still in possession of the Mill and his will records that he left it to his wife. Mr Woodward's wish to live in the mill did not happen.

Seven years later the Mill passes to Thomas Gurney, followed in 1823 by James Pestell. Not long into his ownership disaster struck as the Mill is believed to have burnt down and Mr Pestell rebuilt it. He then was declared bankrupt in the early 1830s. The mill passed in the hands of George Waldock, farmer, miller and brickmaker who lived at Astwick mill. By 1869 Charles Vaughan, a locally important family had brought the mill. They farmed Grange Farm the largest farm in the village. However, not for long as it would appear that he lost interest as in 1871 he was leasing the mill to Samuel Garret.

John Randall, the son of an old Stotfold family, took over Randalls mill in 1876. At first he rented it from Charles Vaughan then when the latter died bought it. William Sarl, the foreman miller for Charles Vaughan and who lived in the mill, was kept on in that role.

A steam engine was introduced sometime before 1890 to assist the water wheel. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the millwork was completely reconstructed. "An iron hurst frame carrying three pairs of French stones and one pair of peakstones was filled. At the same time a new water wheel was put in". Not long after this reconstruction, a brand new roller mill was planned alongside the old mill. Dying in 1900 the work passed to his son Ebenezer to complete. Unfortunately the new mill was doomed as it never really took off. Based on outdated ideas it could not compete with the



Feed hopper to the mill stones

© Jane Waterfield 2008

much larger mills being built elsewhere. Since Ebenezer relied somewhat heavily on railways he failed to see the potential of motor transport and the mill fell into disuse. The old mill was kept running and lasted a further 54 years when, in spite of having a diesel engine fitted, it too fell silent in May 1966.

Once the mills had ceased working the buildings remained empty for some years. Interestingly, listed building consent to convert the old mill into a house and remove much of the mill machinery was refused in 1987. In December 1992 disaster struck as a devastating fire completely gutted the old mill and also the new one. Cause still unknown.

A preservation trust was set up in 1996. Plans by the owner to turn the mill into flats was finally turned down and ownership passed into the hands of the Trust after years of lobbying.

In 2001 enough funds had been raised for work to commence the first stage of rebuilding the old mill as a wooden framed building as it once was. It was reopened in November 2006.

*Jane Waterfield*



## Proposed trip to Hunts County Bats Huntingdon

A trip is being arranged to visit the maker of Cricket Bats

It is hoped that we will be able to watch a bat being  
manufactured from raw timber.

The proposed dates are 13/14<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

If you are interested in going please contact Ron Hanson  
on 01536 412818 for more details and booking your place  
as places are limited to 20.

A location map will be provided.



### **Two quite different Shows**

Terry and I visited two quite contrasting Shows during July for the first time in at least 10 years. Hollowell Steam Rally has grown and grown and we were impressed by the large contingent of Steam Rollers, Engines and other 'steamers' on display, not only on display but actively involved in the parades. The Show has something for everyone and plenty of food outlets, which was a blessing as it was a very hot Saturday - so much so that we both got a bit burnt! There was much to see and watch - woodturning, machinery cutting huge trunks of wood (a table was needed early Saturday morning in one of the tents and hey presto, wood located, machine turned on and a decent plank of fresh sawn wood taken across to complete one exhibitor's stand - marvellous). Everyone was enthusiastic, the commentary at the main ring informative and interesting. Oh and cost - £8 per head but we got in for £4 each concessionary.



The 'table' being cut from a large piece of timber.

© Jane Waterfield 2009

Show number two was the Royal Show at Stoneleigh. We thought we would go as it was to be the last. At least the signage wasn't bad, but we went by a back route to the grounds. Into Car-park B and not too far to walk into the grounds. Once in - no concessions - we had a bit of a shock as it all seemed a bit bare, lots of spaces. We spotted some steam and moved across to view one, yes one, steam engine on view. This engine was with a group of heritage tractors. Talking to the owner, he said that he would not be moving in the next couple of days 'they did not want him to'. So he was to sit there and wait for the 'final' parade, steaming away and blowing the occasional whistle. The tractors were interesting, but no information and lack of people to speak to about them, so we moved on to look at the animals - after all this is what this Show was all about. Alpacas, sheep, a few special breeds of pigs, cattle etc. were there. Being judged, awarded and paraded in their special 'showing rings'. We didn't bother with the Horses; we had seen many at Hollowell. Entering the Cattle sheds was again an education and the breeds extensive. There had been some sort of rumpus as a Bull had got loose, but things were settling down. However, we eventually paid an arm and a leg for two rolls and two coffees, no decaffeinated here take it or leave it attitude! We wondered along the rows of tents looking at the different wares and goods on offer, you needed a mortgage to purchase anything. There was a distinct lack of interest by any of the 'stall holders', only one meat trader (from Somerset) took any interest in passing customers. Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Waitrose all had stands, but apart from the Van with the Ladies in Pigs working, there were no visible tents cooking 'tasties' of English/Welsh/Scottish produce, as there had been all those years ago. The whole show was a great disappointment, especially as it cost £18 each to get in. We overheard one farmer talking and he was saying that the organisers should have thrown open the gates and not charged more than previous years - in fact should have had a party.

Two shows and two quite different ‘feels’: One vibrant and successful, the other flat and despondent.

According to the June issue of Countryfile it would appear that ‘*no-one, organisers, punters or farmers could actually say what the Royal Show stood for anymore. What was its mission statement, or its unique selling point?*’ Without that clarity of purpose, the show could not go on’.

In the same report it mentions that ‘*many regional shows, the Royal Cornish, the Highland and the Great Yorkshire all attracted more punters and 237,000 flocked to the Royal Welsh Show last year. Apparently they had all worked hard to press the provincial pride buttons through local food and local employers, while the devolved governments have done their bit to help*’.

I personally felt that there was a ‘them and us’ feel to the whole Show, whereas at Hollowell, everyone was made welcome. There was something for everyone at Hollowell, including many stands which sold items that were kind to the pocket as well as those who sold the more expensive item. You had a choice whereas at The Royal you felt that you did not dare venture into some of the stands because once you caught the sight of the price you had to retreat hurriedly. If it had not been for the animals, in particular my favourites the Alpacas, the show would have been even more disappointing than ever.



© Jane Waterfield 2009

*Jane Waterfield*



## Miscellany of Items of Interest

### **Another Early Railed Way in Northamptonshire?**

The 1800 - 1805 Blisworth Hill Railway (used while the Blisworth canal tunnel was being built) and the 1805 - 1815 plateway between Blisworth and Northampton (built and operated by the Grand Junction Canal Company until it was replaced by a canal) are well documented. The expected potential of the latter is shown by an advertisement in the Northampton Mercury for 11 May 1805: "Sale of a message or Tenement with extensive range of out buildings at Cotton-End in the parish of Hardingstone and only separated from the Town of Northampton by the River Nene or Nen, lately in the tenure or occupation of Mr. Lester, Agricultural Implement Manufacturer (who is removing his Manufactory to Piccadilly, London). As the Rail-Road from the Grand Junction Canal to the said River in Cotton-End aforesaid, is nearly completed, the above Premises will be found a very desirable Purchase for any Person carrying on a mercantile Concern, or any other Business requiring Room." *An agricultural manufactory in Picadilly !?!*

Less well-known is a rail-road in the south of the county which was the subject of the following advertisement appearing in the 28 November and 5 December 1829 editions of the Northampton Mercury: "Under as Assignment for the Benefit of Creditors. To be SOLD by AUCTION on Thursday the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1829. The Whole of the IRON RAIL-ROAD lying on the Holyhead Road between Towcester and Stony Stratford, Bucks, near Gulley Hill; comprising 1,265 wrought-iron Plates (weight 21 Tons), 275 cast Ditto (weight five tons), 12 railway Wagons, eight three-wheel carts, five pair of Shafts, six pairs of long Gears for Horses, two chaff Boxes, one corn Bin, sundry Hammers, Picks &c; which will be sold in Lots. Catalogues to be had 3 days previous to the sale at the rein Deer, Potterspury; Talbot, Towcester, and of the Auctioneer, Stony Stratford."

*Has anyone further information on this little-known Northamptonshire railway?*

*Geoffrey Starmer.*

### **Rushden Town's old railway - now a new museum**

Rushden was one of the passenger branch lines cut in the Beeching report, but the building remains today and houses a historic transport museum.

In 1976 The Rushden Historic Transport Society was formed to preserve the station for future generations. They were faced with a derelict building and a platform full of scrap and rubbish. After many years of hard work, the Railway Station has become a historic transport museum.

If you walk past the perfectly restored red brick building, coated in old enamel signs, you can still almost smell the steam and hear the iron giants thundering by.

According to the Society its aim is to re-open the Midland Railway branch line, which ran between Wellingborough and Higham Ferrers. At the moment, a quarter mile of the line has been re-laid at Rushden Station and is used for demonstration runs on certain weekends. Plans in the pipeline include extending the track a further three quarters of a mile towards Higham and reinstating the rail bridge over the A6 - now that this road has been de-trunked - enabling one mile of line to be laid towards Wellingborough.

*BBC News website 13<sup>th</sup> August 2009.*

### **Tornado Steams Ahead**

Tornado, the first main line steam locomotive to be built in Britain for almost 50 years, achieved its first 10,000 miles in service on 12<sup>th</sup> July since its completion in 2008 while hauling the 'Torbay Express' between Bristol and South Devon.

The £3m Peppercorn class A1 Pacific locomotive was built over almost 20 years by The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust at its Darlington Locomotive Works.

It is equipped with modern railway safety electronics and has sufficient water capacity to haul charter trains on the main line network.

Tornado recently featured in the BBC's 'Top Gear' programme, racing a Jaguar XK120 car and a Vincent Black Shadow motorcycle from London to Edinburgh.

*Engineering & Technology - 25<sup>th</sup> July 2009*

*If you thought the train won - it didn't. The car did. The film of this was a joy to watch especially Jeremy Clarkson, who thought he was going to 'drive' the train, didn't and ended up being stoker! Where did the Bike come, well last and I can't quite remember but I don't think it even reached Edinburgh.*

### **A famous brand of shoe is in new hands**

Former directors of Church & Co are to take over the running of another prestigious shoe company based in the county.

Luxury shoemaker Cheaney, based in Desborough, has supplied footwear to the England football team and created shoes for a variety of films including Titanic, as well as for many celebrities.

A management buyout by cousins William and Jonathan Church will return the company to independent ownership, 45 years after its acquisition by Church & Co in 1946.

Joseph Cheaney, founded in 1886, specialises in wholly English-made, high grade, men's welted footwear. The company moved to its present site in Desborough in 1896 and now has more than 100 skilled employees and a flagship store in London's Bond Street. As well as Cheaney-branded footwear, the company manufactures men's footwear for high-end brands in the UK and abroad. It is renowned for turning out individual styles with hand-crafted finishes. Each pair of shoes takes eight weeks to manufacture and undergoes many quality checks.

Between them the Church cousins have 14 years of manufacturing experience at the premium end of the shoe trade and 20 years of financial experience in the high-end footwear industry at both retail and manufacturing level.

*Northampton Chronicle & Echo - 10<sup>th</sup> September 2009.*

### **PoW's cocoa tin radio stars in a new exhibition**

An ingenious radio built from cocoa tins, toothbrushes and an ashtray by a British engineer held in a German prison camp during World War Two is among exhibits at a major exhibition looking at the experiences of prisoners of war.

The story of how Captain Ernest Shackleton made the radio from odds and ends he scavenged while in captivity is told in 'Captured: The Extraordinary Life of Prisoners of War', which has opened at the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester. Using a mix of objects, art, documents, photographs, film and sound from the Imperial war Museum's collections, the exhibition reveals the truth behind stories such as The Great Escape, The Colditz Story and The Bridge On The River Kwai.

As well as the experiences of British and Commonwealth prisoners and civilian internees in Europe and the Far East, 'Captured' features stories of Italian and German prisoners in the UK.

Shackleton was a Leeds University graduate who in peacetime worked as a radio engineer with GEC and was a member of the IET's predecessor organisation the Institution of Electrical Engineers. After being captured on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1940 at St Valery-in-Caux during the fall of France, he was held at various camps in Germany before being moved in September 1943 to Oflag IXa Rotenburg.

When prisoners asked their captors to let them buy a 'talkie' film projector, the Germans agreed on condition that a sentry was present when it was being used to prevent inmates carrying out their real plan of using the parts to make a radio.

The projector was later impounded for several months and the exciter lamp for the sound-track was broken. The Germans lost interest in it, and Shackleton was able to use a valve and some capacitors and to make a regenerative receiver covering several wavebands with interchangeable coils made from toilet roll tubes.

Variable capacitor plates were made from Rowntree's cocoa tins rolled flat with a beer bottle and cut with scissors. The spindles were made from clinical thermometer cases. Two toothbrush handles formed the insulation supports. The rectifier valve holder for the power supply was made from a Bakelite ash tray cut and drilled with a penknife.

The completed set, which ran on mains electricity taken from the lighting, was concealed under the floor and operated by knitting needles poked through cracks between the boards. Used to listen to BBC and American broadcasts, it gave PoWs a link to the outside world to the point where they were often better informed than their guards about the progress of the war.

Having remained undetected through a number of intensive guard searches and surprise Gestapo visits, the set worked right up until liberation in march 1945, when Shackleton insisted on being taken back to the camp to collect it.

*The exhibition runs until 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2010.*

*Engineering and Technology - 25<sup>th</sup> July 2009*



### **Of This and That**

Thank you to all members who have sent in their membership subscriptions for the year 2009/10 and for renewing their membership.

A timely reminder: Membership subs are due for the year 2009/10. The rates are £8.00 single and £11.00 joint and family. Blue renewal forms were sent out with the last issue of the Newsletter. New forms can be printed from the NIAG website and sent with cheque and full details. Receipts will be sent out with the next issue of our newsletter. Can you please note the following important notice.

Due to Jan's current ill health, and to ensure that he is not bothered unduly, the committee requests that, for now, all subscriptions be sent to (Dr.) Terry Waterfield or paid to him at any of the events.

Terry's address is 6, Bakers Lane, Norton, Daventry, NN11 2EL. Phone Number 01327 312850.

#### **Wanted: New Committee members**

We are looking for 'new blood' to join us. The duties are not onerous. We arrange the trips for the summer period and the speakers for the winter season. New ideas are always welcomed. Meetings take place four times a year in convivial surroundings.

The notice for the AGM will be enclosed with this newsletter. If you have a mind to join us, this is the time to do so. Thank you.

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

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 9 <sup>th</sup> October    | Talks begin at St. Matthews Garden Room.<br>The Wolverton & Stony Stratford Tramway - Bob Ayers   |
| 5-8 <sup>th</sup> November | Archaeology of Bridges at Regensburg, Germany. For further information send an e-mail to bridges2009@t-online.de.   |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> November   | Wiltshire IA Symposium: Wharf Theatre, Devizes. Details write to IA Symposium, Wiltshire Heritage Museum, 40/41 Long Street, Devizes, SN10 1NS. 01380 727269 or wanhs@wiltshireheritage.org.uk. |

## **Dates - continued...**

- 13<sup>th</sup> November NIAG AGM and talk - Eurostar - Record Breaking Train - Alan Scott
- 11<sup>th</sup> December NIAG Talk : Northamptonshire Gardens - Jenny Burt

## **2010**

- 8<sup>th</sup> January Members Evening: Various presentations.
- 13/14<sup>th</sup> January Proposed visit to Hunts County Bats, Huntingdon. Details on page 11 and more next newsletter. Places limited to 20.

## **Did you know?**

2 million pages of 19<sup>th</sup> century newspaper has been digitised and put online by the British Library.

The number of military personnel stationed abroad found in the 1911 census came to 135,000.

100,000 is the approximate number of court cases concerning children's non-attendance of school in 1883. (*wonder what it is now if any!!*)

In the first four months of the war, 4,133 people were killed on Britain's roads - a 100% increase on the previous year.

2,000 issues of The Gentleman's Magazine, an 18<sup>th</sup> century journal, have been published at Ancestry.co.uk, offering insights into what our ancestors might have read.

## **Shipbuilding - Fact file**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century to become a shipwright required an apprenticeship. A typical 1787 agreement paid a master shipwright £3 to take a boy as an apprentice.

In 1845 British shipbuilding employed 20,000 people, of whom 50% worked between the Thames and the Bristol Channel.

In 1850 Britain built 134,000 tons of ships, of which 90.5% was timber and 9.5% iron. In 1868 370,000 tons were built of which 43.5% was timber and 56.5% iron. Between 1870 and 1900, 36% of the workforce was on the Tyne, Wear and Tees; 31% on the Clyde.

In 1920 John Brown's of Glasgow had 9,297 workers at average pay of £4.2s; by 1922 they had 3,635 at £2.14s.

*Taken from the Who Do You Think You Are magazines August to October 09*

According to the Home Grown Cereals Association £187 is the price per tonne, for milling wheat, or bread flour. This represents a drop from a high of £216 per tonne in April 2008, but remains above historical averages because of 2008's wet summer.

*Taken from Countryfile magazine - June 09*

## **A brief History of Bread....over 12,000 years.**

Bread dates back to the late Stone Age - around 12,000 years ago.

In medieval Britain a piece of stale bread called a trencher, roughly 6in x 4in, served as an absorbent dinner plate. At the end of the meal it could be eaten, given to the poor, or fed to the dogs.

The first recorded attempt to standardise food and drink into prescribed quantities goes back to the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215, which decreed: 'There shall be standard measures of wine, ale, and corn throughout the kingdom'.

Bread was first regulated in 1266 by the Assize of Bread, which was made law under Henry III. It fixed the size, weight and price of loaves according to the cost of wheat.

The law stayed in force, with updates taking price rises into account, until its repeal in 1815 by advocates of free trade.

However, fixed weights for loaves were re-established by the Bread Acts of 1822 and 1836.

Standard bread weights became metric in 1997, with any loaf weighing over 300g having to be sold in a size that is a multiple of 400g.

*Daily Mail - 26<sup>th</sup> September 2009*

## **Planning Applications**

09/0079/OUTWNN - Upton Way, Duston Mill Lane, Northampton - Outline Planning application for the constructions of a 112 bedroom hotel complex, spa and leisure facility, access road, car park and associated development. All matters reserved except from access, appearance, layout and scale. Map Ref: 472787/259839. Deadline is 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

09/0090/FULWNN - Market Square, Northampton - Installation of a 7 jet water feature, re-paving and installation of street furniture-seating, bollards, uplighting etc. Map Ref 475462/260567. *For interest only* as the deadline for comments is the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009. [*don't' remember seeing anything about this in the Chronicle and Echo*]

09/0077/FULWNS - CWG Site, Old Greens Norton Road, Towcester, NN12 8AX - Demolition of existing factory building and construction of food store (use class A1) and two commercial starter units (use class B2) - Map Ref: 468774/249343 - *For interest only* as the deadline for comments is the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

09/0076/COUWNN - Upton Lodge Farm, Weedon Road, Upton - Change of use of existing residential farmhouse to form YMCA Youth Hostel (Sui Generis) and change of use of existing residential bungalow to provide YMCA staff accommodation. [*This is for information only as the date for comments has long gone and information was not available at the time of the last Newsletter issue*].

## **Finally**

### **Spoil sports**

For more than 200 years the church clock of St. Michael's, Helston in Cornwall has kept everyone in touch with time. In that time (200 years) a volunteer warden has trudged up the tower on his own to wind the mechanism that keeps the clock ticking. The tradition, dating back to 1793 is coming to end because of the health and safety brigade.

Apparently the warden has been told the job is too dangerous because he has to climb a ladder and reach out to wind up the clock. The church will have to find £5,000 from its funds for a machine to do the job. The warden has said that winding the clock is a simple operation carried out up a ladder and involves reaching out from the top in order to reach the winding mechanism. It is now considered to be a health and safety risk. The clock mechanism has to be conserved and an automatic winding system fitted which complies with the guidelines.

The warden has been 'captain of the tower' for three years and in that time has not had an accident. The keys are turned on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday and no problems have even been had. The clock is built like an old grandfather and would stop working if it was not regularly wound. The warden takes six/seven steps up the ladder, around 8ft, and is not bothered about the height. His predecessor retired when he was 82 and still managed it fine having done it for some 40 years. The warden is 63 and was hoping to carry on for another 15 years as he feels he is more than capable.

*Daily Mail - 18<sup>th</sup> September 2009*

*So be careful when you next step on a stool to reach into the back of the cupboard to reach a new pot of jam on a high shelf, or worse fall over a flower pot when cleaning the downstairs windows - you might need to be health and safety checked!!*



## **NIAG Committee**

President: Geoffrey Starmer, 34 The Crescent, Northampton,  
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Chairman & Secretary: Peter Perkins, Eastfields Farmhouse, Manor Road, Rushton,  
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## **Newsletter Editor**

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## **Newsletter:**

Next Issue: **January 2010**

Deadline for all articles and information **20<sup>th</sup> December 2009**. 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.