



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY  
GROUP

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NEWSLETTER



ISSUE 114 - SPRING 2010

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Photograph front cover:

Cyffty mine: View to the Western pumping shafts from the Crusher House.

© Jane Waterfield 2009

## From the Editor

2010 certainly came in with a bang and what weather. I am afraid I cannot cope any more with the intense cold and as for snow – got a bit fed up with looking at white fields from the windows. Driving was not much better, once, that is you could get off the drive and onto the main roads, and then with some trepidation hoping that the wheels would not spin as you made that final turn back into your own road to reach the safety of the drive. Memories of trudging to school in thick snow as a child – no skiving off because the teachers couldn't get in and that you might slip over and hurt yourself. In London the buses ran, as did the underground and trains. Delays certainly, but everyone got on with it and walking between the bus-stops was the norm until you could get on one.

We were in Wales the week before Easter and what a shock to wake up on the Wednesday to find the whole area covered with 8" of snow, thankfully we were indoors and working (Terry) on the electrics of the Club's 'hut'. Having said that, there were some rather idiotic people who were up on the hills - a small group had left us the day before to walk and camp in the mountains. They came back during Wednesday afternoon looking somewhat cold and bedraggled as it was blizzarding most of the day. Have we seen the end of the snow – I certainly hope so.

The January meeting was the usual mix of talks and fourteen of us managed to brave the evening elements to make it to the hall. We gave Geoffrey a bit of a surprise with a cake (special birthday last year) and this, with the coffee, made a nice end to the evening.

Terry has been working very hard the past couple of months to re-organise the web-site and you will notice many changes to this if you care to look.

The summer programme is enclosed with this newsletter and again the committee have come up with an exciting programme of walks and visits, and for those who enjoy the train trips, Barry has organised another great day – and we can only keep our fingers crossed that nothing spoils the arrangements (Strikes!). We look forward to seeing you on one of the Fridays.

*Jane Waterfield*



## WALKS AND VISITS OF 2009 -THE LAST REPORTS

### **Of Mines and Mills – The Field Trip to Snowdonia - June 2009**

We visit Wales about five or six times a year, and as we can no longer walk the mountains we decided to have a project - this to locate and visit as many of the mines, and old working quarries as we could. North Wales, especially in the Snowdonia area, is almost awash with old workings and evidence of these old mines and quarries. It was while we were looking at one of the best persevered remains of a mine that we hit on the idea for a field trip for members of NIAG. So

we set about preparing a programme which was a mix of mines, quarries and a fully working woollen mill.

Part one of our report concentrates on the first day since there is a great deal of history to impart on the places visited. Part two will concentrate on the second and third days when we visited Anglesey and the site of the works for Penryhn Quarry and will be brought to you in the next issue.

### **Part One: The first day:**

Jane and Terry arrived at Glan Dena mid-afternoon followed shortly after by Ron and Matthew, who were given an introduction to the area after tea. The basic programme for the visit was to be lead mining and wool on the first day; copper mining and Amlwch; and slate quarrying on the last day.

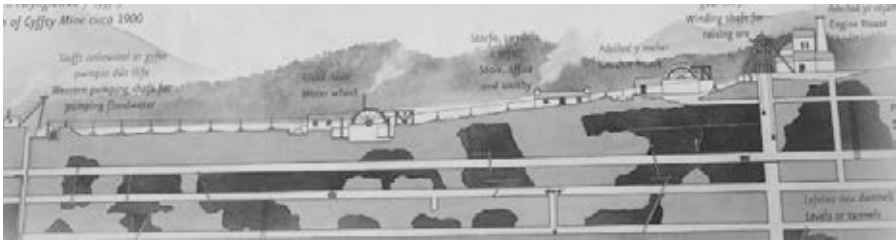
In the area between Bettws-y-Coed and Trefriw and extending from the Conway valley to the Crafnant valley there existed some 40 mines in the mid-nineteenth century, mostly lead but also zinc blende. Although legends suggest that the Romans worked the area for lead, Sir John Wynn of Gwydr (1553-1627) is considered to be the father of mining in the area; his interest began with an enquiry about the mineral waters on his estate in 1607. There was little concerted interest in mining the minerals until the nineteenth century; even then it was on a very limited scale with less than 100 tons per year being shipped to the smelters in Flintshire from Trefriw Quay.

By the end of the century, mechanisation had been introduced, which in turn led to a consolidation of the smaller leases and to greater investment, not only in terms of machinery, but in providing more shafts, creating drainage adits, etc. Over 500 men were employed with zinc blende being the principal ore sought. During the twentieth century Parc, Hafna, Cyffty, Pandora and Aberllyn mines attracted attention on a much larger scale than before. During the 1950s Parc mine raised more ore in a month than was ever raised in a whole year from the entire mining area during the nineteenth century. Parc, the last of the commercial operations, finally closed in the 1960s.

Both lead and zinc blende were extracted at the Cyffty mine, the first site to be visited. This mine, like others in the area, has had a chequered history: having raised 33 tons of ore in 1878, 89 tons in 1879 and 145 tons in 1880, liquidators were appointed. Although a small amount was raised the following year, there was no activity until 1884 when a new lessee took over; but he only managed to raise some 100 tons in 15 years! Although the mine changed hands several times, there was little real interest in mineral extraction. In fact Cyffty was at the poor end of the lode which extended to Parc. With the exploitation of Parc mine, some two miles distant, levels were driven into Cyffty to provide emergency exits.

The surface remains, including the crushing house, store, office and forge building, twentieth century dressing plant and wheel pits, were examined. There was little evidence of the many leats that fed the water wheels - nature has recovered its own.

Nothing, save an outline of the foundations, remains of the engine house and boiler house, both of which were demolished in 1966, less than 90 years after their construction.



Showing the cross section of Cyffty mine c.1900.

(c) Jane Waterfield 2009

Hafna mine is unique in this area as the only mine to have its own smelting house. The lode, which this mine exploited by driving into on a number of levels in the hillside, was the most important in the area. Like Cyffty, Hafna changed hands a number of times and output of both lead and zinc ores fluctuated with time. For example between 1857 and 1859 100 tons of lead ore and 60 tons of blende were weighed; yet during the ten years up to 1875 only 30 tons of lead ore and blende were weighed. In the final two years of the century some 200 tons of lead ore and over 1200 tons of zinc ore had been raised. Early in the twentieth century, electrical power was brought from a generator at the Pandora mine and during 1913 and 1914 over 60 tons of pig lead, 40 tons of lead slag, 50 tons of lead ore and 500 tons of blende were weighed. Thereafter the mine was effectively idle, though efforts to raise finance were thwarted by the onset of hostilities in 1939 - not surprising since the source of the sought-after capital was a certain Hermann Goering A.G., which was scouring the world for minerals for the German Economic Bureau. There was talk of there being 107,000 tons of zinc ore in the Hafna mine.

The mine buildings are built into the hillside, the most prominent feature being the chimney high up on the hillside connected to the smelting furnace by a ground level flue; little else of the smelting house remain other than a few walls and a few feet of narrow gauge track that leads both into and past the site of the hearth. The process was logically organised: ore was dropped from high-level storage bins onto the sorting floor, from whence a chute fed the ore to the crusher. Below that were the twentieth century flotation cells used for concentrating the ore. From each of the higher levels, a tramway led away from the buildings following the contours and passing through brick-lined archways beneath an inclined plane.



Cuffty:  
Looking at the western  
pumping shaft for pumping out  
floodwater.



Hafna mine showing  
its furnace chimney

1.

Looking at the remains of the sorting floor and from there the view (2) to the road and other remains of this very well preserved Mine.



2.

Trefriw woollen mill has been in the same family for 150 years and is still producing yarn and tapestry on machinery that Arkwright would recognise. Although they still handle local wool, sadly it now comes from one of the major wool markets rather than direct from the farmers as in days gone by. Although the mill is open to the public, we were taken on a guided tour by the owner, who explained in great detail the various processes from receipt of the bales of fleeces through to the weaving. Those who visited Massons Mill with NIAG a couple of years ago were shown a carding machine: that was a baby compared with those at Trefriw, where they have two carding units adjacent to each other. Each carding unit comprises four carding drums; two carding drums are located, one after the other, on the same frame to produce continuous strands of wool. These are gathered and fed into a second pair of drums with the woollen strands being laid back and forth across the width of the carding drum. The output strands from this



Two of the four carding machines, Trefriw mill.  
(c) Jane Waterfield 2009

second pair of drums is then ready for spinning. One of the carding units was started specially for us. The mill has two spinning Jennies each comprising 130 bobbins; one was in operation, as it usually is when the mill is open to the public. After doubling, the yarn is wound into hanks for the dyeing process, then wound onto bobbins for use in the weaving process. The weft for the looms is prepared on a large drum; the colours for a single pattern being wound together at the same time and then repeated across the drum the appropriate number of times. Downstairs we were left in the hands of the weaver who was operating the 5-shuttle loom. The mill generates its own electrical power, 60kW, using water piped down the hillside.

Our final visit for the day was to Dolgarrog where until 2007 aluminium was smelted using electrical power generated next door. This village was the scene of some devastation in 1925 when the dam in Cwm Eigiau burst. Walking up to the remains of the dam situated high above the village, we could see across the valley the track bed of the tramway that was built to carry slates from the Cedryn slate quarry located higher up the cwm down to Dolgarrog. Lack of time, and light, prevented further exploration that day.

*Jane and Terry Waterfield*





## WINTER PROGRAMME 2009 / 10

### **The Wolverton & Stony Stratford Tramway - Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October**

Member Bob Ayres presented an illustrated account of the Wolverton & Stony Stratford Tramway, which despite its apparently Buckinghamshire origins, did in fact qualify as a Northamptonshire subject by virtue of a short lived extension to the village of Deanshanger.

This very distinctive street tramway, eventually built to 3'6" gauge, had its origins in a speculative scheme of 1882 which sought to build a 4ft gauge tramway line from Wolverton LNWR station to Stony Stratford, over 2 miles distant.

However, after some false starts, work actually began on a revised scheme, and was granted Board of Trade sanction in May 1887, employing two Krauss steam tram locomotives, and with a selection of passenger cars ranging from an almost normal 20 seat car through to three giant double deck 100 seat cars. The intention of the line was originally to convey goods traffic from the LNWR goods yard at Wolverton to the surrounding industries, and several goods wagons were also obtained for this purpose. However the line is perhaps better known for its carrying of hundreds of daily 'commuters' between Stony Stratford and their workplaces in the LNWR carriage works, and McCorquodale's printing works at Wolverton.

Shortly after the line opened, an extension was built to Old Stratford and onwards to the Fox and Hounds Inn at Deanshanger, completed in 1888. This was destined to be the greatest extent of the tramway, with a planned further extension to the Dukes Arms in Deanshanger never being built. The line ran along the centre of the main road through Wolverton and Stony Stratford, but along the 'country' sections the route switched to the roadside verge. Financial difficulties resulted in voluntary liquidation of the company in 1889, but it was reopened in 1891, but terminated at the Cock Hotel Stony Stratford, with the extension to Deanshanger being abandoned, and two years later the connection with the LNWR goods yard at Wolverton was removed. By 1919 the system had contracted further, with the terminus now being at the Foresters Arms in Stony Stratford, and in July of that year the company once again went into liquidation. However that was not quite the end of the story, as the LNWR, seeing the line as a useful way of transporting its workforce, purchased the company and proceeded to modernise the track and the sagging passenger rolling stock, which emerged from overhaul in Wolverton Works in a smart new livery. This situation ensued for another seven years, but by 1926, motor buses, which gave a quicker service, had been introduced in the area, and the competition was to prove too much for the tramway, which closed on the eve of the general Strike on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1926.

The track was then lifted in stages between 1927 and 1934, but as one photograph clearly showed, there were some sections that were merely buried and have

recently been rediscovered during road construction schemes. Other relics of the line have also been discovered, including parts of the passenger cars which have seen service since closure as local garden sheds or conservatories, including in one case almost the whole of a double deck car built into a property in Piddington.

Bob's fascinating talk was illustrated by a vast selection of splendid archive photographs, which covered not only the hardware of the tramway, but also provided a nostalgic glimpse of Wolverton, Stony Stratford and the surrounding area almost a century ago.

*Barry Taylor*



Here is one of the three huge 44 feet long, 100-seater, carriages of the Wolverton & Stony Stratford Tramway, built in 1887 by the Midland Railway-Carriage & Wagon Co Ltd of Shrewsbury. Note particularly the rudimentary protection for passengers seated on the top deck!

The vehicles carried standing passengers also. At peak times for workmen at the Wolverton Carriage Works there are photographs showing the steam engine pulling two 100-seat carriages and one 50-seater, so with standees possibly a capacity of some 300 passengers a journey. Incidentally the system also had an 80-seat and a 20-seat carriage, the latter used only it would seem on the short-lived extension to Deanshanger.

The vehicle is standing in Wolverton Road at the Stony Stratford terminus of the line – the taller brick building behind it is the Foresters Arms public house, still open today. The lighter building to the left is the side of the British School, closed in 1907. The latter then became a meeting place called the Public Hall, but today is a Dance School. On the ground floor one can just see the awning fronting what became the Tramway Office.

As for the advertisement although it mentions ‘The Drapery’, actually Thomas Charles Palmer was listed as a tailor at Nos. 1 Gold Street and 2 Bridge Street in Kelly's Directories from 1906 to at least 1936. Perhaps a member has more information about this man?

*Bob Ayers*

## **Eurostar – Record Breaking Train – Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November**

The concept of a tunnel under the English Channel is nothing new - several ideas were put forward in the nineteenth century even before the birth of the railway. One interesting proposal had a station located on the Varne sand bank in the middle of the channel! After a résumé of these early attempts, Alan Scott, formerly a radio and electronics engineer in the RAF working on comets and the V bombers before joining Eurostar, outlined the timetable of events that led to the first service through the tunnel in 1994, some eight years after the signing of the treaty. He then went on to describe the basic construction of the tunnel - all three of them. The main strand of his presentation was the design and construction of the HS1, Britain's first new railway line for many a decade, the new high speed link between the tunnel and St Pancras station in London.

As any of those who have used the Eurostar service to the continent will know its Achilles' heel was the line between Waterloo and Ashford - it is basically a commuter line with very few, if any, opportunities for trains to pass the one in front. Whereas the French built their high speed link to the tunnel at the same time as the tunnel's construction, we had to wait for ours. The first section was completed in 2003, the section under the Thames to St Pancras four years later with the first service from St Pancras in 2009.

Although most of the construction work might be classed as straightforward, the work around Ashford station was particularly difficult from a train operator's point of view: the new line meant that this station would be by-passed for many of the services, though provision had to be made for services to stop at Ashford. This required HS1 to cross onto the old commuter line; nothing that a bit of 'cut-and-cover' tunnelling couldn't resolve. Modern practice is to sink numerous concrete piles to form continuous walls either side of the tunnel; then the cover is put in place, either with pre-cast beams or poured concrete. Once the sides and roof are in place the tunnel is excavated from within causing minimal disruption on the surface.

Construction further up the line followed conventional practices: the bridge over the River Medway was push-launched from either side. In this technique the bridge roadway is assembled on the bank and then pushed out to meet the central cantilevered section. The new line passed through 56 SSIs, which of course had to be respected and necessitated a good deal of archaeological work. Roman villas, a medieval market and numerous historic buildings were excavated.

Following the completion of the line a mobile laboratory spent 18 months carrying out tests on the line: main areas of interest included the power drawn from the supply network (there is a major climb out of Ebbsfleet), running speed, vibration of the rolling stock. To monitor the current collection characteristics of the pantograph/overhead line cameras were located on the roof of the train. A major area of concern was that of electrical interference - both to other rail rolling stock and to vehicles on the adjacent M20. Regulations require that testing has to be carried out at a speed of 10% above the maximum design speed of the train: but the

train is equipped with safety features to prevent it from ‘overspeeding’! So all safety systems have to be disabled - a situation that the HSE tried to stop (but had to put up with). As the tests continued the speed of the train was regularly at the test limit; but the best was left until last - when the press and media were present to witness the fastest ever run with a maximum speed of 334.7 kph.

Construction of the London tunnel between Dagenham and St Pancras used the new Austrian tunnelling system through the London Clay. Where the line crosses the East Coast Mainline a new bridge had to be constructed; again the push-launch method was used to position it.

At Stratford, the site of the new Stratford International Station, the track is laid in a sub-surface ‘box’, on top of which will be constructed the station complex. At the time of the lecture work had not started on the station because the whole area around the station is the site of the 2012 Olympics and out of bounds to Eurostar and its contractors. A new station has been constructed at Ebbsfleet on the south bank of the Thames, this replaces Ashford as Kent’s Eurostar station.

For the technically minded, Alan gave a few facts: A Eurostar comprises 18 carriages accommodating 770 passengers and costs £24m; in reality it is two 9-carriage units coupled in the middle. It is powered by 12 three-phase motors each delivering 1 MW of tractive power. Each axle on the motor unit and on the leading bogie of the first passenger car provide the traction for each of the 9-car units. The original design required that the train be able to run on 25kVac, 3kVdc, 1500Vdc and of course 750Vdc third rail networks. The supply voltage across high speed networks has now been standardised at 25kVac; the only exception being the approach to Brussels Midi station, which is served by 3kVdc.

The total cost of the 108 km HS1 line was £5.2 billion.

Alan is an excellent speaker and can deliver presentations on almost any aspect of the Eurostar and HS1. This was my third presentation by Alan, each has covered different topics.

*Terry Waterfield*



### **Northamptonshire Gardens – Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December**

Jenny opened with a reference to the Northamptonshire Gardens Trust which was set up in the early 1990s – since when she has been its hardworking, very successful, and quietly encouraging, Chairman. Gardens Trusts now exist for almost every county, taking a broad interest in designed outdoor spaces, both old and new, from deer parks to pocket parks, recording the historic landscape and offering support, and occasionally, small sums of money to encourage the development of a project.

Jenny began her look at Northamptonshire's rich garden heritage, at Holdenby, using the Finch Hatton estate maps of 1580 and 1587 to show the changes carried out by Sir Christopher Hatton, before all was destroyed during the Civil War. At around the same time at Lyveden Thomas Tresham constructed a series of gardens up the hill behind his house. These were edged with canals, using the spoil to create raised walks and snail mounds from which the garden's layout and planting could be appreciated. Since his Banqueting House – the New Beild – was on top of the hill, he ingeniously created a dry 'moat' to shelter those walking around it. At Lyveden research was aided by Tresham's letters to his employees during his imprisonment for his faith. Both gardens illustrated the importance of documentary research.

The underlying structure of the garden at Drayton House near Thrapston survived through benign neglect: from 1718 to 1843 Drayton was only one of several properties in the Sackville family ownership and was maintained at a distance, rather than lived in. The fine but simple layout c1700 by the royal gardener, Henry Wise, with its avenues, parterre, urns and statuary, remained, rather than being swept away in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the interest in historicism, Drayton's layout came back into fashion and was given a 'makeover' with bedding plants then newly available. Another early 18<sup>th</sup> century survival can be seen at Harrowden Hall, where the Wellingborough Golf Club does a remarkable job in maintaining part of the formal layout. As at Drayton, beautiful wrought ironwork set into brick walls creates 'claires voies' – literally clear views – to the park beyond.

Jenny demonstrated that we also have gardens which have 'enjoyed' constant attention and have changed with the fashion of the time. Thomas Tresham's other house at Rushton Hall had formal gardens in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The park was then landscaped in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, before receiving a great deal of attention from its largely absent owner, the diamond merchant, William Williams Hope, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. As well as moving the main road away from the house, and increasing the water features including a most unusual serpentine rill, Hope created a perimeter drive around the park, and removed the enormous spiral mound dating from c1600 which had leant against the North side of the house, making those rooms very damp. Again it is the correspondence between the absent Hope and his steward, Mr Brunning, which sheds light on the work.

The most significant example of the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape movement in the county is that at Castle Ashby, where the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl asked both Robert Adam and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to draw up plans for his park. Avenues to the North, East and West, planted in 1695, and barely reaching maturity 60 years later, were uprooted, and Brown's plan, with elements of Adam's design, were put in place. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an Italianate garden was created south of the church, and, as at Drayton, parterres were recreated near the house. Brown's successor, Humphry Repton, worked at several sites in the county, drawing up plans for a fairly

extensive scheme at Harlestone House c1811, including a lake and very fine stables which survive though the house does not.

Jenny's wonderful selection of the county's gardens concluded with the 1980s garden designed by Rosemay Verey at the Old Rectory at Sudborough. Linking back to her introduction, this reminds us that the Northamptonshire Gardens Trust is very much about new as well as old design. For more information on the Trust visit [www.northamptonshiregardenstrust.org](http://www.northamptonshiregardenstrust.org)

*Judith Hodgkinson*



### **Members Evening – Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January**

14 hardy souls braved the rather awful weather, snow and ice, to get to the annual member's evening. The subjects covered were wide and varied and Jane and Terry Waterfield kicked off the evening with a stroll through the summer walks which included a very brief look at what had been seen in Wales.

Ron Hanson gave a talk on the road transport in Cuba and how, having been cut off from fresh resources since the 1959 revolution when the USA imposed a trade embargo, they have improvised using what was already available on the island. Many of the private cars were 1950s American gas guzzlers, many of which are now used for private hire. Of buses there were very few of what we understand as buses, but a great many trucks had been converted by welding a staircase on the back. These were used mainly as workers' transport to factories and passengers would stand during transit. School buses would be a horse-drawn cart with bench seats down either side. These clip-clop taxis were available also for use as buses about town and at night would have an oil can swinging from the back axle with a flaming rag hanging from it to warn approaching traffic from the rear. If any passengers required to travel a longer journey they would make their way to a major road junction where a government employee dressed in bright yellow overalls, and known as the banana man, would ask their destination and sell them an appropriate ticket. The banana man has the full authority to stop all vehicles passing that junction and if one has room he would be obliged and paid an amount to carry them. This ensured that the transport was full, utilised and a service provided, even though you might be standing for the journey in a truck that has just delivered pigs to market!

Cuba has had to innovate to exist 51 years with less than nothing, but shows that where there's a will there's a way.



Peter ended the evening with his short presentation aptly named:-

***A tale of 5 (or 6) brick-kilns***

When we were preparing the first edition of the NIAG Gazetteer some 10 years ago, we were able to identify five sites in the county at which there were significant remains of brick kilns. These were at Denford, Great Doddington, Harlestone, Raunds and Spratton. The one with the most visual impact was at Great Doddington, a full-sized forest of trees growing out of its roof. Geoffrey Starmer thought that the brick kiln on the Castle Ashby Estate was still in existence but a search of the area at the time failed to find it, so the Gazetteer just listed the five. A year ago on my tour of Gazetteer sites I confirmed that all five kilns were still in existence.

Late last year I came across a reference to the Castle Ashby kiln in an old NIAG Newsletter – complete with a grid reference. So one afternoon in October, I set off to investigate. Low and behold in a spinney off the Castle Ashby to Grendon road I found the remains of the brick kiln, still pretty well intact.

Boyed by the thought that we now had the remains of six brick kilns in the county I stopped off at Summer Leys nature reserve near Hardwater Mill on the River Nene to do a spot of birdwatching. Sitting in a bird-hide, my binocular strayed across the Nene valley and alighted on a spot in the fields close to the houses of Great Doddington. Surely not – it couldn't be true? I rushed across the valley to Great Doddington and peered over the fence at the field where the Great Doddington brick kiln stood – or more correctly didn't! The site had been flattened and the trees had been felled! For a period of about 20 minutes I could visualise the second edition of NIAG's Gazetteer recording the remains of six brick kilns in the county. Sadly, there will still be only five – unless you know different!

Great Doddington Brick Kilns



January 2009



October 2009

(c) Peter Perkins 2009



### **Visit to Hunts County Bats – Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> January**

As the day dawned on the 13<sup>th</sup>, NIAG had a team list of 11 hardy souls, ready to visit the cricket bat manufacturer over the county border in Huntingdon. However, this number was soon stumped and caught out by the snowy, frosty weather and the team was reduced to 5 not-out by the time we reached Huntingdon. There we were met by Steve Turnock and Tony Cook. Steve is the manager and Tony was to be our guide and demonstrator. Steve gave us a bit of history of the company and told us that it was established about 1900 by a Mr Trimmings in the George yard in Huntingdon. After its initial start-up Mr Trimmings went to India to try selling his wares to the army in India and as a result of his setting up suppliers locally for cricket clothing and gloves etc, these suppliers are now exporting this equipment back to the UK to be sold in the Huntingdon shop. Unfortunately India now manufacture their own bats.

Tony started off by showing us how the willow for the blade of the bat is split from a 2 ft 4 in length of tree trunk in sections similar to cutting up a cake, ensuring that the younger outer part of the wood is used which is more springy than the core of the trunk. These pieces are kiln-dried to approximately 16% moisture content and sawn into basic billets before delivery to Huntingdon. The timber is English willow and supplied by a Chelmsford or Woodbridge merchant. On arrival at Hunts County Bats the billet is then machined on a 4-spindle copy lathe after which the V for the handle is cut. The handle is made from bamboo and is split through before re-assembly, sandwiching a rubber shock-absorbing insert. The blade is then taken to the bench where it is hand-planed and spoke-shaved until semi-finished. The face of the blade is then hardened by compressing between hydraulic rollers. This reduces the face by about 1/8" – 3/16" but enables the soft willow to withstand impact with the ball. The handle is then glued in





Shaped timber waiting to be made into cricket bats.

(c) Jane Waterfield 2010

and after curing the bat is further spoke-shaved. The whole is then sanded and polished with paraffin wax, and a twine is turned onto the handle over which a rubber grip is placed.

The rules of cricket state that a standard adult cricket bat is 38" long and 4¼" side and has to be made of wood, but there is continuous change to thickness and shape due to individual batsmen's requirements and style, i.e. weight can be added or take away from the thickness of the bat whilst balance can be changed by lowering the shoulders, i.e. lengthening the handle and reducing the blade. Altogether we had a most interesting morning in which our thoughts had drifted to warmer, summer afternoons, only to be shocked back to the present when we left the factory - it was snowing.



Hand-planing the bat.

(c) Terry Waterfield 2010



Detail of finished bat.

(c) Terry Waterfield 2010

*Ron Hanson*



## Miscellany of Items of Interest

### **More cast iron kerbing in Rushden.**

Further to Barry's interesting piece about the iron kerbs in Rothwell, member Alan Chappel writes:

*"I was interested to read of Barry Taylor's find of a cast iron kerb in Rothwell. In my earlier days, when I was a NIAG member living in Rushden in the 1970s, this type of kerb was very common, particularly in the College Street/Duck Street area of the town."*

Have they survived into 2010 – this is the question? Hereunder are a few photographs which Alan enclosed with his note and which might start someone off on an investigation!



Williamson & Reynolds Iron Kerbs, Rushden – October 1977



Highfield Foundry Iron Kerbs, Rushden – February 1976



Highfield Foundry Iron Kerbs, Rushden – October 1977



Reynolds Iron Kerb, Rushden – October 1977

All photographs (c) Alan Chappel



### **Historic Bridge being revitalised**

Fireworks lit up the night sky over the River Tamar last year (2009) to celebrate 150 years of the Royal Albert Bridge – Isambard Kingdom Brunel’s engineering masterpiece, which provides the only railway link to Cornwall.

The bridge, which opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1859, is to undergo extensive clean-up and strengthening works, including restoring the two main spans to their original colour – which is currently unknown, as it is hidden under 30 layers of paint.

This will be the most complex refurbishment work since the bridge was completed. Network Rail is carrying out a detailed study of the structure to better understand the original design. Over the next six months, engineers will plan the renovation programme, and work on site will start by summer 2010.

An area of 20,00m<sup>2</sup> will be painted using a three-coat system that is also used on the Forth Bridge. Work will also be carried out to repair and replace worn-out structures, including all the hangers and track girders.

*Engineering & Technology – 25<sup>th</sup> May 2009*



### **Corus Tubes – a few facts.**

The first steel was produced at the Corby Stewarts & Lloyds integrated iron and steel works in 1934.

In Corby, Corus Tubes manufactures tubes from approximately half a million tonnes of steel a year, which arrives by train from South Wales.

Tubes are used in many applications, such as the roof at Arsenal’s Emirates Stadium, lamp-posts, signposts and forklift trucks.

They also have another site in Hartlepool that manufactures large diameter tubes that are large enough for a man to stand inside. These are used to transport oil.

There are six processing mills in Corby, five form the tubes and one stretches them with a force of 250 tonnes for applications that require highly precise sizes, such as hydraulic cylinders.

The tubes made in Corby range from 1.3cm diameter, smaller than the diameter of a 5p piece, to 19.3cm diameter, which is a little smaller than the diameter of a football.

They have been mass-producing tubes for structural support to buildings in Corby for about 50 years.

*Northampton Chronicle & Echo, Business section – July 2008.*



## **Of This and That**

### **News from the Treasurer**

Can I remind you that renewal notices will be going out with the next edition (115) and that the subscription will be £10 for single members and £12 joint membership. This was agreed at the last AGM.

We are still awaiting transfer of ownership of the website name to the Group, which is very frustrating. The only way around this would be a complete rename of our website, which I am reluctant to do at the moment. Once we have ownership then I can provide mailboxes for contacting the officers.

### **Sponsoring our Winter Lectures**

At the 2009 AGM an issue was raised by a member to the effect of sponsorship for our meetings. If anyone would care to sponsor one of our winter meetings can they please get in touch with the Treasurer (*details at the back of this issue*).

### **Can you help?**

#### **1. Ratcliffe & Jefferies Brewery, Northampton**

Alaric Neville from Phipps NBC along with Mike Brown from the Brewery History Society (also a NIAG Member) have recently visited the property on Kingswell Street that was formerly part of the Ratcliffe & Jefferies Brewery. Phipps NBC are investigating the potential of the surviving part of the brewery building being returned to its former use and asked if any NIAG member (other than Mike Brown) has information on the building – plans, pictures etc – which could be used in future displays. They would also welcome any information about the building's 'sweet factory' days.

Apparently the recently demolished warehouse belonging to the brewery along Commercial Street (where the modern casino now is) had a bust of Bacchus over the main gate which survived from Ratcliffe days. Does anyone know what happened to this when the building was demolished?

It would be excellent if the buildings that survive could find a use relating to their original purpose. Anyone with information should contact Peter Perkins (eastfields.rushton@btinternet.com or 01536 713256) who will pass it on.

## **2. Greens Norton Mill**

Recently I was approached with a request from a newly formed History Group at Greens Norton about a mill which had once stood in this village. If anyone can assist me in tracing a picture of this mill and indeed can let me have a copy of it for passing on, could you please let me know. As always any original material will be returned to you, by person or post. Many thanks. *Jane W. Editor.*

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

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 24 <sup>th</sup> April | SERIAC 2010 – will be held at the Chertsey Hall, Heriot Rd, Chertsey, Surrey. Advance notice only.              |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> May    | Summer walks and visits commence. See enclosed programme.   |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> May   | Heritage Day – Swanning around Swannington – EMAC 79 being hosted by Leicestershire Industrial History Society. |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> June  | Thorpe Malsor Steam Engine Rally  |

### **Did you know?**

A Royal Commission in 1861 found that the average annual pay for a certified schoolmaster was £94, the equivalent of a skilled artisan. Certified women teachers earned an average of £64. By 1895, this had risen to £123 for certified male teachers and £80 for female.

In the 1870s the average salary of a master at the bigger public schools was £250 a year, a solid middle-class income.

In 1821 there were 7,090 attorneys and solicitors holding practising certificates in England and Wales. This figure rose to 10,229 by 1861 and in 1901 there were more than 16,000 solicitors in practice.

Inland Revenue statistics of 1857 showed that the highest earning solicitors were making around £2,000 a year. The rest had professional incomes of between £800 and £1,400 a year, though many earned less.

A mid 19<sup>th</sup> century legal clerk could expect around £150 a year depending on his experience.

In 1778 stonemasons could expect to get 3/- for a 10 hour day, the same as carpenters and bricklayers, while labourers would get just 1/10d.

By 1801 stonemasons were paid between 3/8d and 4/5d, with labourers on 2/5d. Masons wages rose to 6/3d by 1866, reaching 8/7d by 1914.

In 1838 there were 4,953 members according to the Friendly Society of Operatives (60% of those eligible to join). During the building boom of the 1890s membership soared, peaking at 19,682 by 1899. But the growth of subcontracting hit the society hard, and by 1910 it had just 7,055 members.

*Taken from Who Do You Think You Are – February to April 2010*

### **County Cricket Season**

Bats to the Future: Northamptonshire's cricketers warmed up for Friday's start of their County Championship season by signing dozens of bats to be auctioned off for charity.

*Northampton Chronicle and Echo, Friday April 9<sup>th</sup> 2010.*

*Having been to Hunts County Bats, which makes the bats, it was nice to see a picture of them in the paper. See report on page 14.*

### **Finally**

Saw this in the Daily Mail and thought to share it with you all.

#### **The problems with purchasing anything from abroad!!**

#### **Achtung! Zis car park ees full**

You might call it something of a language barrier.

A car park ticket machine has been giving bemused motorists orders in German.

A fault in the ticket dispenser makes it give instructions in English until the car park is full, when it switches to German and prevents drivers passing through the barrier.

Motorists pulling up to the council-owned multi-storey on Brunel Street, in Birmingham, are greeted by a sign reading "*If the display shows German writing it means car park full. Please wait until display returns to English before obtaining ticket.*" A spokesman from the Birmingham City Council told the paper that "*it's been like this since December. The system that operates the display is German and something has gone wrong*". The council are now waiting for an engineer to fix it.

A representative from the Plain English Campaign said that "*people often feel the public information they receive might just as well be in a foreign language, but this is quite bizarre*".

The machine tells drivers "*Die Parkplätze sind voll, Bitte warten Sie*", which translates as "*The parking lots are full, please wait.*"

*Daily Mail – January 29<sup>th</sup> 2010.*



St Pancras – date unknown



St Pancras as it is today

See page 9 for the report.

### **NIAG Committee**

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### **Newsletter:**

Next Issue: **July 2010**

Deadline for all articles and information **20<sup>th</sup> June 2010**. 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.