



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY
GROUP

NEWSLETTER



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Photograph front cover: A Morgan
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From the Editor

It seems like only yesterday when I put words to computer to type up the latest note from myself. The summer seems have gone in a blur with excellent walks during the summer months. The last few were rather beset by very inclement weather but apart from the drenching the five of us got when we went to Cogenhoe the rain did not dampen, pardon the pun, the walks. The last one of the season in Northampton was a gem. Peter took us on a mini tour of a small area which had, at one time, been alive with small factories making shoes and other associated goods.

We were, once again, at the Northampton Heritage Fair on the Saturday of the Heritage weekend. A great deal of interest was shown and we sold a few of the new Gazetteers – certainly the article by David Saint assisted.

With this mailing are the papers for the AGM in Northampton, please remember to bring them with you if you are coming as there will not be any spares. This is in line with keeping costs down. No doubt the Treasurer will have another interesting report to make to members.

Thanks should be given to those who were one of the ‘guides’ for our summer walks and visits – this is always appreciated and if any members have any ideas for future walks, talks and/or visits then please contact me or our Secretary.

No-one has contacted me about the request for information about Barry Taylor’s trough (issue 119). So this item will remain a mystery, however should anyone have a clue to what the trough may have been used for, then please let me know pronto.

A few weeks back we went up to Long Buckby Station and stood on a very cold and wet platform to await the passing of the Tornado steam engine en route back to London via Northampton. A large number of people turned out to see this engine and were well rewarded when it thundered through at a great rate of knots, bearing its passengers south to London. Steam, smoke and noise assailed the senses. Photographs? I got three and Terry about 6!

A break away in August took us to Scotland and to a few very interesting museums. Also visited was the Falkirk Wheel. Fantastic piece of engineering and massive – and Daventry wants to have one here between the Grand Union Canal and the proposed Canal Arm in Daventry! Simply ridiculous.

We then spent a long weekend in Wales at Llanberis. We stayed in the former Manager’s house, which has now been converted into four excellent self catering units. From here we explored the National Slate Museum somewhat changed from when we last visited some 20 plus years ago. We also explored some of the IA trails around the Museum and need to go back to complete the most difficult!

Importantly the date of our December meeting has been moved forward from the 9th to the 2nd. A flyer is with this mailing.

Jane Waterfield

2011 SUMMER WALKS AND VISITS

Finedon Ironstone Quarries and Calcine banks – Friday 20th May

The intention of the visit was to follow the course of the former ironstone railway from just west of the old Buccleuch quarry at Finedon down the incline to the site of the former calcine banks, for this we were fortunate to have a pleasant sunny evening with firm conditions underfoot. Originally, the railway line ran from the quarries at Finedon down to the main railway line at Neilsons Sidings near Wellingborough. The course of part of the line was opened as a footpath in 1984, and at the same time the former calcine banks area became a nature reserve.

The Finedon ironstone quarries had an interesting history, at first the area was worked by the Glendon Iron Company but this company went into liquidation in 1891 and work ceased. Work was restarted by Charles Barlow in 1901 and continued under his son until October 1925 when the land was sold to the Ebbw Vale Iron & Steel Co., this company was taken over by Richard Thomas & Co in December 1935.

Before starting our walk we looked at the cricket field, this is located in an area that was quarried by Charles Barlow and is now several feet below the level of the adjacent roads. We then made our way to the entrance to the footpath; soon after we joined the route of the railway we went under the Burton Latimer to Finedon road via the old railway bridge (planning permission for which was granted by Wellingborough Urban District Council on 11th March 1941) adjacent to which it was possible to see the 'ironstone bench'.

When the quarries at Finedon were reopened by Richard Thomas & Co., in May 1939 the output was at first transferred from standard gauge to narrow gauge wagons and taken to Irthlingborough where ironstone was being removed by underground mining. Production at these mines had been commenced in 1920 by the Ebbw Vale Iron & Steel Co. A tunnel was dug from the underground mines at Irthlingborough to an adit in the quarry face at Finedon, the break through taking place on 19th February 1939. The total length of the underground route from Irthlingborough to Finedon was 4,450 yards and the tunnel went under the A6 trunk road twice.

The route to Irthlingborough was supplemented by the standard gauge railway down to the main line in 1941 and from this date most of the output went away by this route, although some still went via the tunnel until 1945. The standard gauge line was laid to a high standard for an industrial railway line; the track was laid onto ballast with concrete sleepers used in the cuttings and wooden sleepers used on the embankments. The quarry closed on 23rd May 1946 although reopening was still envisaged until about 1954, but this did not come to pass. After closure the track was left in position until it was lifted about 1965/6, when this took place the concrete sleepers were left in situ. These sleepers remain there today and we were able to see them as we followed the course of the line; in addition the

remains of some of the wooden sleepers were still visible on the embankment slopes.



The remains of the railway incline

© Jane Waterfield 2011

The group followed the route of the railway as far as the area where the calcine banks used to be sited. Here the iron ore would have been unloaded from the wagons, layered with coal and formed into large mounds which were then set on fire. This had the effect of drying the ore and thereby reduced freight charges as the weight of dry ore is considerably less than that of wet or as-dug ore. When the calcining process was complete the ore would have been reloaded into main line railway wagons and taken away to be smelted. This area is now overgrown but a path follows the perimeter of the site and as we followed this it was possible to see the remains of the calcine banks in the undergrowth. Here the remaining ironstone was a purple colour an indication that

it had been calcined and not just tipped and left. When the quarries closed a large amount of the ore remained in these banks and this was removed in the early 1960s, by this time no locomotives remained on site and so a locomotive was hired from British Railways to do the job. From this point the course of the railway to the main line has been levelled and it is no longer possible to follow the route.

After spending some time looking at the remains of the calcine banks we retraced our steps back up the incline and back to the start of our walk.

Mick Dix

Source: original research and The Ironstone Quarries of the Midlands, Part IV, Eric Tonks, Rumpast Publishing, 1990.



Stoke Bruerne – Friday 3rd June

After assembling at the Lower Locks car park, we first headed ‘downstream’ to just beyond the lowest lock. We were joined for the evening by Mike Constable, NIAG member and curator of the Canal Museum, to add some local knowledge and he started by recalling times when the River Tove – which joins the canal here – had flooded to leave narrow boats stranded on the towpath as the tide ebbed.

The canal had reached here from the south in Autumn of 1800, but had got to Blisworth four years earlier. In 1797 a toll road was constructed over Blisworth hill to meet up with the Hardingstone to Old Stratford turnpike (now the A508) and in late 1800/early 1801 this had been supplemented by a double track tramway, and the tranquil scene before us must have been one of the busiest inland ports of the country. It was to be another five years before the Blisworth Tunnel was completed.

In 1835 duplicate locks were added to improve traffic flow and conserve water, and these lasted until 1852 when the original top and bottom locks were converted to side ponds, the middle five duplicates filled in and new side ponds provided to the west - where the field boundary still shows how additional land had to be purchased from the Grafton state to accommodate them. The literature differs on which locks are originals and which duplicates, so a detour was taken onto the road bridge to see how the original locks were aligned on the church tower at Grafton Regis. And they still are. The side ponds appear to have fallen out of use around the time of WWII.



Debating the Bridge design

© Jane Waterfield 2011

A pause was taken at the road bridge in the village and the question posed why a skew arch? A newly laid out canal, a recently laid out road (the original village

street was cut in two by the canal); the difficult terrain some way to the north where the tunnel is. So why a skew arch?

Much of the evening was spent looking at the bits of canal kit displayed in the centre of the village, put there when the canal museum had 'national' status that has since been lost to Gloucester.

The original top lock has, since 1963, housed a boat weighing machine but Mike tells us that this might be moved to South Wales, from whence it came. Built in 1834 for the Glamorganshire Canal Company, it served in three different locations on their ditch before being dismantled in 1955. 40 ton capacity, and balanced so that 1lb on the weigh pan equals 1 cwt of boat. Similar machines existed on the Somerset Coat Canal at Midford,, the Monmouthshire Canal at Newport and the Thames & Severn at Brimscombe (and a visit to the Brimscombe Port re-development website shows that they, too, are keen to get their hands on 'our' weighing machining). Built by Brown Lennox and Co at their Pontrypridd works, a company better known for their chains; I guess we have all seen the photo of a cocky looking Brunel in front of their huge chains for the Great Eastern.

Being weighed is 'May', a 'station' boat that shuttled between factories and depots on the Birmingham Canal Navigation. She was built in 1928 by Yarwoods of Northwich and came to Stoke in 1989.

At the foot of the original lock stands a pair of iron gates from the Montgomeryshire Canal at Welshpool, and carved into the stone still is "G W BUCK ENGINEER". George Weston Buck was born in April 17689 and after time spent on water supply schemes in London and Portsmouth became engineer to the Monty in 1819, earning the 'iron mad' tag for his use of iron for lock gates, sluice gear and bridges. He later worked with Robert Stephenson on the London to Birmingham railway then, from 1838 to 1842, built the Manchester to



Looking at 'May'. © Jane Waterfield 2011

Birmingham, his master piece being the Stockport viaduct. He also wrote the standard railway era treatise on skew arch bridges, running to four editions between 1839 and 1895. William Chapman (*see Dodford Bridge article on page 15*) had first provided a method for skew arches in 1787: construct falsework and on it lay out how the courses need to be places; then in 1828 Peter Nicholson had taken the method forward by providing a guide to how stones can be cut to shape

off-site: basically, do scale drawings. Finally, George Buck set out the trigonometry with which the required angles and dimensions could be calculated.

Further towards the tunnel, the canal narrows at the site of the Rectory footbridge. An old photograph in David Blagrove's *'The Canal at Stoke Bruerne'* shows the bridge to have had curved ribs of cast iron giving a very flat 'arch'. It is very similar to three bridges on the Ellesmere Canal constructed by Jessop and/or Telford at around the same time, and which still stand. But why build a cast iron bridge here? And was it the first in Northamptonshire? Could this link to the surprising use of a skew arch where none was needed? The only guess I can offer is that these were the last two bridges to be built on the canals, and if Jessop had wanted to help a favoured group of workmen find employment now that their GJ work was ending, there could have been no better way then to send them forth with glowing references about how they are versed in the construction of both skew arch and cast iron bridges, the two major new techniques of the day, with Jessop a master of them both.

Matthew Nayler



Wellingborough Town Walk – Friday 17th June

About 6pm the long awaited rain for this area began to fall, and by 7.30pm eight members were congregated in the Castle car park, Wellingborough, beneath umbrellas in what was becoming a steady downpour. We were eagerly looking forward to a 1½ hour walk around Wellingborough in the rain!

Fortunately when we entered the museum (our meeting point), Ian our guide had a cunning plan and suggested a guided tour of the Museum, finishing with a slide show after tea and coffee.

The museum building was originally Dulley's swimming baths built by David Dulley and opened in 1892. It was one of first pools to have heated water, which was the outflow water from a refrigeration plant in the neighbouring brewery, also owned by the Dulley family. In 1920 it was sold to George Cox who converted it into a shoe factory.

A portion of the original pool walls and floor have been made into a feature in the cafeteria section. Adjoining this area are exhibits relating to the boot and shoe industry, as well as pillow lace making, and brewing. The remaining ground floor shows the origin of the name Wellingborough, i.e. "Waendal's burh" with a full size Anglo-Saxon warrior model representing Waendal, the Irchester hoard, plus other artefacts on the history and development of Wellingborough. Upstairs is an area devoted to photography and cinematography, and a section showing shop and house layouts from the mid 20th century using items gathered from the town. Finally in a small ground floor building originally used as an engine house for the shoe factory, a Ruston single cylinder light diesel engine is being restored. It is a

Ruston type 5 HE (serial no. 147814) built in 1927. It is not the original one installed in the George Cox factory but is the same model.

At this point we retired to the auditorium for tea and coffee and a film show on the development of the site since taking over the derelict buildings into what we had just seen.

We finally emerged to a very sodden Wellingborough, thankful that we had been in the dry all evening.

Ron Hanson.



River and Railways at Thrapston - Friday 1st July

A beautiful sunny Friday evening greeted 17 members and friends who joined Ron Whittaker in the centre of Thrapston. The group initially walked along Chancery Street, past Castle Fields up to a new impressive nursery and health centre, where they turned left along the footpath over Thrapston Marina and the old Northampton – Peterborough railway line to Islip Mill. Whilst passing Castle Fields, reference was made to an earlier NIAG visit in 2000 where one of the residents invited us into their garden, which was next to the Fields and showed us the actual Castle mound.



Islip Mill from the south. Islip lock is just off to the right of the Mill.

© Ron Whittaker

Crossing the Nene, the group compared a photograph of Islip Mill in operation and taken in the early part of the 20th century, with the building today. Surprisingly the mill and mill house remain structurally intact but in need of renovation. The mill was converted to electric power in 1950 but it ceased grinding flour in 1960. We

then returned to the eastern side of the Nene and walked along the new footpath alongside the lock and new housing which has been developed in recent years. The group were impressed by the regeneration in this area and the way in which the Nene down to the Nine Arches Bridge had been developed into a very attractive area. On the eastern bank of the River, close to the bridge, an old stepped wall approximately 12 ft long, 8 ft high and 2 ft wide has been left. The group were unable to identify any possible previous use for the structure.



The medieval Nine Arches road bridge over the Nene

© Ron Whittaker

Back on the old A604 road, we walked towards the town and on the small bridge close to the Midland Road roundabout, Peter Perkins said that the short waterway which goes under the bridge and flows into the Nene, acted as Thrapston Wharf. Various features of this former use were still evident.

Thrapston had an important position on the Northants railway's map as it contained the crossing point of two lines and had two stations. The first was the LNWR Northampton to Peterborough railway of 1845 and the station with level crossing was situated in Bridge Street, close to the Nine Arches Bridge. The station closed as part of the Beeching cuts in 1964. The single-tracked Kettering – Cambridge "Varsity" railway line was constructed in 1865 and had a station on Midland Road to the south of the town. There was a passing loop at the Station but low levels of traffic meant that the passenger service and station were closed in 1959. The remainder of the evening was spent on investigating the course and remains of both railways.

The embankment of the LNWR line from the Nene to the old A604 is still in position and therefore it was straightforward to identify the position of the level crossing. However, using old photographs it was surprisingly difficult to be clear of the actual position of Bridge Street Station on the current Scott's of Thrapston site. An added interest was that in the Northants Evening Telegraph on the evening of our visit, there was a plan showing how they wish to develop the Scott's site to accommodate a new supermarket. It was reported that Scott's (who have made wooden sheds and conservatories for 90 years) would be moving to an out-

of-town site. This announcement follows a similar plan for Sainsbury's to erect a supermarket on the Cattle Market site in the centre of the town. Again, it is planned by the Auctioneers Bletsoe's for their Cattle Market to be moved to an out-of-town site to the east of Thrapston. No doubt one or most likely both, will have been built when NIAG makes its next visit to Thrapston!

We continued our visit by crossing over the Nine Arches Bridge and walking across the pleasant countryside south of the bridge to the crossing point of the two railways. At the bridge which still stands where the Kettering to Huntingdon line went over the LNWR line, we compared today's scene with an excellent photograph (plate 152 from Coleman and Rajczonek's book "*Steam Railways in Colour Around Northants*") taken in July 1963 showing a Stanier class locomotive with passenger train bound for Northampton. Of particular interest was the signal box on the LNWR line which guarded the siding (which ran parallel to the Midland line) into Islip ironworks. Apart from the church and a few houses, little could be compared with the photo taken nearly 50 years ago. The area between the railway and town has been extensively quarried for gravel during the period and has now been restored for leisure and angling.

We then walked eastwards to view the magnificent Midland Railway viaduct over the Nene which still stands and can be seen from the A14. The brick viaduct dates from the 1920's as the original was a metal trough supported on a trestle construction. We then walked northwards along the side of the Nene and saw the chimney on the opposite bank which is the only remaining part of Thrapston Mill. The final site which the group examined was the bridge which carried the Northampton to Peterborough line over the River Nene. Only the abutments remain of this bridge although it was probably used in later years after the railway closed to carry the conveyor belt bringing gravel from the pits. Many members might remember from the 1970s and 80s the gravel conveyor passing over the old A604 road at the level crossing site. The railway bridge is an exception in that all the Northampton to Peterborough line bridges between Thrapston and Irthlingborough have now been restored to form a cycleway as part of the Stanwick Lakes development.

We made our way back to the cars at around 9.30 pm after an interesting evening viewing the considerable transport remains which still exist in Thrapston.

Ron Whittaker



Cogenhoe & Whiston Quarries - Friday 8th July

By teatime the rain clouds had cleared suggesting that we might have a pleasant evening's walk to view the remains of the quarrying activity in the area between Cogenhoe and Whiston. By the time a small but determined party had assembled in the car park of the Royal Oak the portent was not too good. The quarries in question were situated to the south of the Cogenhoe-to-Grendon road with the

Whiston and Cogenhoe No 1 quarries located on the high ground between the villages and Cogenhoe No 2 quarry due south of Cogenhoe village itself.

Our route started by following the line of the railway that served the Cogenhoe quarries before turning up the hill to walk over - or should it be across - what was the No 1 quarry. Operations started in 1858 using both mining and opencast methods, though it is believed that the mining was short-lived and the bulk of the stone was quarried. A narrow gauge rope-worked incline delivered the stone to a tipping dock on the standard gauge line connecting to the LNWR Northampton-Peterborough line.

Once on the brow of the hill we could look across the stream towards the village to see the location of the No 2 quarry, which was opened up c1869 to win ore from a considerable area of outcropping stone. The standard gauge line was extended along the valley to serve this quarry; narrow gauge tramways conveyed the stone from the working faces to a tipping dock. For its day the Cogenhoe concern was quite large and in addition to ironstone quarrying a considerable amount of clay was dug, a brickworks being erected near the LNWR junction.

Tonks* notes that both the quarrying and brickworks did not survive the slump of the late 1880s with all the equipment being sold off and the brickworks razed to the ground. Now, the only evidence of the No 1 quarry is a shallow step in the terrain indicating the back wall of the workings; both of these quarries having been back-filled when extraction ceased. A bullrush-filled pond now stands where the brickworks once stood.

The path continued along the edge of No 1 quarry eastwards towards Whiston. After a short while the group was aware of a steep drop on its left; this was the back edge of Whiston quarry, which has not been re-instated but left to nature. The group descended some steps to a clearing in the quarry floor; in front of us was a high bank on which the railway track had been laid. Fortunately the trees provided shelter from a brief shower.

Whiston quarry, which adjoins the Cogenhoe No 1 quarry, had a fairly chequered history with four owners in less than ten years having been opened in 1914 by J.W. Pain. It was served by a standard gauge line from the LNWR; after crossing the road it climbed the hillside before entering the quarry area on the level. Since the quarry was some 40ft deep, an elevator was used to load the trucks with ore. The overlying limestone was also quarried for fluxing purposes. Three years later J.W. Pain sold the concern to Bloxham Ironstone Co Ltd; a year later they sold it on and by c1921 the operation had closed down. Although the railway track was lifted, the engine shed was to remain until the end of the twentieth century.

A modern breach in the embankment led out of the quarry to a farm track. Here our guide Ted made a small diversion to show us a stream which it is thought was used as a source of water for the workings. Although remains of any structures can't be seen, farmers still turn over bits of masonry, brick and ballast when ploughing.

Whiston church stands atop a hill and is accessible only by a field footpath from the south or a metalled path from the village at the foot of the hill. It does not have an electrical supply, so 'candle-light' services are just that! But the interest for us lay across a small paddock to the 'new' rectory where quarry owner J.W. Pain once lived.

A field path leads from the outskirts of Whiston village towards Cogenhoe; partway across the field a large gap in the hedge on our left was pointed out to us - the site of the engine shed for the quarry's locomotive. The last leg of the walk was along the road back to the cars. By the time we reached the site of the tipping dock and the embankment up to Cogenhoe quarries the rain was fairly heavy and continuous so we were glad to have declined the offer of following the field path by the site of the old brickworks back to the village. There was one last piece of IA heritage to view - the site of the burnt-out shoe factory.

Our thanks to Ted Barnes, Chairman of Cogenhoe and Whiston Heritage Society, for leading this walk for us.

Terry Waterfield

*Tonks, E., (1989), *The Ironstone Quarries of the Midlands: Part III The Northampton Area*, Runpast, Cheltenham. ISBN 1-870754-03-4.



Morgan Cars – Wednesday 13th July



One can imagine that buying a new car to be a daunting experience - the choice of models, which variant and which upgrade package and of course the choice of colour for the body and trim. But what if your chosen brand was a Morgan? Three or four models, a choice of two leather trims, four dashboard colours and finally paint colour from a bewildering palette of 40,000 colours! And then the extras! Each car is hand-built on an almost standard chassis to the purchaser's exact requirements - there is no such thing as a 'catalogue' model.

A group of 17 members and friends had gathered in the Visitor Centre at Morgan Cars for a factory visit; it is the longest surviving car manufacturer still in private

hands and we were afforded a personal welcome - albeit recorded - by Charles Morgan. As we left the Visitor Centre we found him showing off their new three-wheeler to some visitors. More of that later. Our first stop was the original factory building to view a line-up of five Morgans - these were no showroom models, but in private ownership and kept at the factory. In the next bay some 20 vehicles were awaiting delivery to their new owners. No two were the same!

The 'production line' snakes down through the next four bays of the same building; the chassis starts at the top and the body starts at the bottom with the partially completed vehicles being rolled out from the middle of the 'line'. The engine-gearbox, back axle and front suspension are fixed to the chassis together with road wheels; the chassis is then rolled to the next stage for attachment of various ancillary items.

The body starts life as a collection of wooden piece-parts cut from ash or marine ply; lengths of ash are glued and screwed together to form the basic body and doors and marine ply is used for the inner rear wing and the outer wing. The latter is formed into its characteristic shape from several thin sheets glued together and left in a press whilst the glue sets. Although the piece-parts are initially cut to size on power saws/mills/shapers, the assembly and shaping is all done by hand using traditional carpenters' tools.

Cladding of the body space frame is completed in the tin-shop; sheets of aluminium are cut to the required size. The larger pieces for the bonnet and wings are rolled into shape whilst the smaller pieces are 'beaten' to fit the wooden frame. All of the pieces are cut to fit the



A steady hand is needed to cut the aluminium!

wood. The front wings are built to a standard pattern and then trimmed to size at the fitting stage, which is carried in the next bay. Here the body meets its chassis and a few other ancillaries before being wheeled across the drive to the paint shop.

In the paint shop, the front- and back-wings, doors and anything else that will get in the way are first removed. Water-based paints are used throughout; the colour is applied in three or four layers followed by a number of layers of lacquer. Hand-buffing completes the process.

Across an alleyway is the trim shop and final assembly areas. Whilst still in its basic rolling chassis form, the interior trim is fitted. The leather is supplied pre-cut to approximate size, the final trimming being done at the fitting stage. Gaiters for the gear lever are hand sewn to the tunnel covering; the seats are also hand finished in the customer's choice of leather. Finally everything comes together in the 'final assembly' bay. This is followed by a post-production inspection, a short test run, a

visit to the underseal shop for its protective layer and then final inspection and polish.



Final inspection

Nearly 60 years after building its last three-wheeler, the company decided to return to its roots and build a three-wheel car: Fitted with a 2.1 litre two-cylinder S & S engine mounted outboard at the front, a Mazda 5-speed gearbox and a belt drive to an ultra wide single rear wheel its performance is stunning.

If you are looking for something a little cheaper, then you could go for the three-wheel pedal car with 3-speed gears. This is being built in a limited edition to celebrate the company's centenary.

Terry Waterfield

Photographs for this report © Jane Waterfield 2011



Kenneth Tickell - Pipe organ designer and builder – Friday 15th July

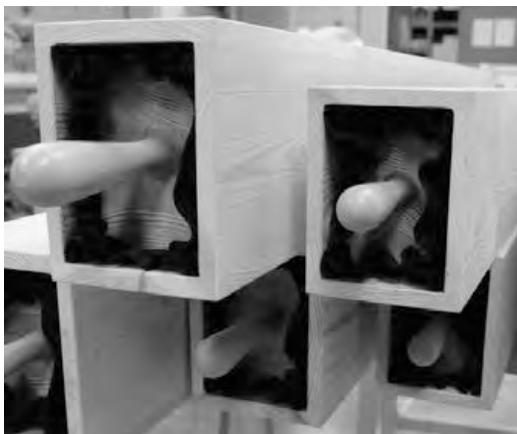
Who would have thought that in the middle of an industrial estate, and surrounded by a number of companies associated with the automotive industry, you would find a world-renown organ designer and builder? 24 members gathered outside a typical industrial building for what was to be a very interesting evening to learn of the skills required to build an organ, the basic concepts of which haven't changed for three centuries.

As a music graduate, specialising in the organ, Kenneth Tickell learnt his craft as an organ builder with Grant, Degens and Bradbeer Ltd before establishing an independent workshop in 1982. He moved to larger premises four years later; he has been at the current site since 1996. He is one of the founder members of the Institute of Organ Building and is currently an Executive Board member.



Ken had had the foresight to persuade his wife Pippa to help out, which meant that we could split into two more-convenient-sized parties. She took us on a tour of the workshop where we saw stacks of wooden pipes, some had been fitted with their tuning stops and their frequency noted on the mouthpiece. Organ cases are usually made from oak, which is sourced from Czechoslovakia because English wood is of an inferior quality. Other woods are used for decorative purposes and

pine for the pipes. Some of the difficulties associated with designing wood were outlined. We also saw some of the actions and linkages that connect the keys on the keyboard with their appropriate valve for sounding the pipe. Metal pipes are manufactured from lead/tin alloys by a specialist pipemaker: a higher tin content is usually used for the front pipes so that they retain their bright appearance over time. A demonstration of



tuning was given by Simon who had just returned from working on-site.

Ken gave a potted history of the company with slides of some of the instruments that had been built; they ranged in size from small portable instruments to that installed in Worcester Cathedral in 2009. The case designs ranged from a simple modern concert look to the most ornate required in churches. It was surprising to learn that most church organs, when installed by Victorian and early twentieth century organ builders, had been sited in the most inappropriate place adjacent to the choir - the sound of the choir was drowned by the organ and the congregation couldn't hear either!. An important aspect of any new build, therefore, is the siting of the instrument in the most acoustically suitable location within the building. Finally he showed illustrations from an eighteenth century manual for organ builders to demonstrate how little the technology has changed; materials might have improved but the basic design hasn't. Indeed modern metals are now so pure

that a small amount of copper has to be added to achieve the required characteristics.

With both parties together Ken showed some detailed drawings, and finished frames, of their current job. He also demonstrated the components associated with sounding individual pipes and collections thereof with the 'stops'.

All organs are assembled and tested in the workshop before being taken apart and despatched to the customer's site. There a team reassemble the instrument before handing over to the tuning maestro. Final tuning/voicing is always carried out on-site.

An excellent evening demonstrating that basic craft skills are still required in a modern age.

Terry Waterfield

Photographs © Terry Waterfield 2011



Dodford Canal Bridge

On our visit to Stoke Bruerne last June (2010), we examined its skew arch bridge and questioned why a skew arch had been used there – as discussed in the report on page 4. A second issue, expanded on here, is whether Northamptonshire might claim the first correctly constructed skew arch in the country.

Conventional wisdom has it that William Jessop built Britain's first proper skew arch bridge at March Barn on the Rochdale Canal in 1797. This idea can be traced back to Cyril Boucher's biography of John Rennie, published in 1963. Boucher was a Manchester academic who had noted that two adjacent bridges on the Rochdale Canal employed different techniques to achieve a skew angle.

“Gorrell's Bridge is built with courses parallel to the abutments, but very large stones are used for the faces of the arch, some 6ft. long and proportionately wide. This means that the arch can only square itself by shearing across the actual stones, not by travelling a zig-zag course along the joints as in a brick bridge. In fact the arch as built is perfectly sound after 160 years of use. March Barn Bridge, on the other hand, has a perfect skew arch with winding courses. Among the several bridges which cross the canal at an angle it is the only one so constructed. It is of approximately the same date as all the others and manifestly represents a try-out, and the author has no hesitation in describing it as the first skew arch to be built with winding courses.”

Boucher was too enthusiastic in attributing work to John Rennie (whom he also credits with the Cosgrove Aqueduct), although Smuel Smiles had also credited the Rochdale Canal to Rennie a century earlier. In 1969, Rolt's 'Navigable Waterways' queried the extent of Rennie's contribution – Rennie had done the Parliamentary Survey, but the Company's Minute Book showed William Jessop to have laid out the line and been the consultant engineer, assisted by Henry Taylor and William Crossley. So now there were three names in the frame for March

Barn. 'John Rennie' wasn't one of them. By 1971, however, Ronald Russell in *'Lost Canals'* is clear that the Rochdale was the work of Jessop and March Barn was the first correct skew bridge.

The story was revised again in 1973 with Ruth Delany's account 'The Grand Canal of Ireland'. Built over a period of fifty years to 1806, Jessop was its engineer between 1789 and 1800. A 2.5 mile branch to Naas, the Kildare Canal, was built in 1789-89 by William Carpenter, and here he built the first proper skew arch. It was demolished and replaced soon after the Grand Canal had taken over the Kildare in 1808, because its dimensions and lack of towpath did not conform to GC practice. Chapman did not write up the invention until penning his article on 'Oblique Arches' in Rees's 'Cyclopaedia' of 1820.

So that is how the present position stands: William Chapman constructed the first skew arch in 1787 at Naas; Jessop was familiar with his work; Jessop built the first skew arch in Britain at March Barn in 1797.

But what about Dodford Bridge? It looks old; it is a skew arch in brick with winding courses; the intrados appears primitive (compare, for example, how the brick courses meet the facing ring at Dodford with the much neater skew bridge (no 41) south-east of Bugbrooke); the thickness of the arch is of only one brick length as appears to be the norm with early GJ arches; the canal opened between Braunston and Weedon in June 1796; the 1937 date stone on the parapet surely relates only to a rebuilding of that parapet; the canal is following the contour of sloping ground so Jessop would have been reluctant to change course to meet the lane on the square; the OS map shows field boundaries around the bridge to pre-date the canal, so presumably the line of the road also predates it; Jessop was employed as chief engineer by the JC between 1793 and 1797, spending eighty days a year on site so surely would have had input to matters such as bridge design.

Are any NIAG members aware of information that might help date Dodford Canal Bridge and see if it has any claim to pioneer status?

Matthew Nayler



Miscellany of Items of Interest

JTrails

Web-site: www.jtrails.org.uk/

JTrails, the National Anglo-Jewish Heritage Trail, aims to raise awareness of Jewish heritage. They have established a number of Jewish Heritage trails in England, based on a major, interactive website and local events. They describe their website as intended to become '*a major co-ordinating and educational resource*'.

To date, trails have been established for Northampton and for Brackley. One is also planned for Bletchley Park. Each trail includes a map of sites of places and heritage, with a history and chronology of the community and sites along with interactive features including photographs. Organised tours are also offered.

The JTrails website introduces the Northampton and Brackley trails as follows:

“One of the leading medieval communities in England, Northampton’s Jews were given the boot in 1290. However, seven centuries later they would return to give the boot to Northampton.

Brackley is a very small market town, in rural Northamptonshire, on the main road between Northampton and Oxford. Until after the War, the town was little larger than a large village, with a market place and 2-3,000 residents. However, the town has an unexpected and little known Jewish heritage, largely dating from just after World War I, to the end of World War II. It illustrates the unexpected links that Jewish people could often have in deeply rural areas and it is also a particularly good example of the ranges of Jewish war-time experiences as refugees and evacuees in the countryside”

Northamptonshire Let Yourself Grow website

www.northamptonshireletyourselfgrow.com/live/history-heritage

This website contains a variety of heritage and related items. Appears to be run for Northamptonshire enterprise Partnership which proclaims itself as having been launched in May 2011 ‘to develop the Northamptonshire economy for the benefit of the county’s communities, businesses and visitors.’

Components or links include a wide range of entries under the History & Heritage part of the website, including ‘The Sound of Battle’ an audio guide to Naseby battlefield involving local students; a Northamptonshire timeline ‘from 3500 BC to the present’; information on ancestral tourism and a Northamptonshire Museum and historic houses website at:

[www.northamptonshireletyourselfgrow.com/museumsandhistoric houses/](http://www.northamptonshireletyourselfgrow.com/museumsandhistoric%20houses/)

There is a link to a Northampton Town Trail which begins at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and finishes by the ‘ancient’ Market Square. Links to previously accessible heritage trails for Daventry and Spratton no longer operate. (not sure why??)

The above two pieces courtesy of Graham Cadman

Chester House in the News

Two people were being investigated by police on suspicion of attempting to loot buried treasure from the site of a historic Roman walled town in Northamptonshire. Police confirmed the two suspects remained on bail on suspicion of illegally using a metal detector; the theft of treasure, damage to the land and other offences at a site of “*tremendous historical and archaeological importance*”. They are believed to have attempted to take Roman coins and other historical artefacts.

Police said ‘several’ alleged crimes were being investigated at Chester House Farm, in Irchester, which is regarded by historians as one of the most important sites of its type in the county. Police are now liaising with experts from English Heritage and a national police expert about pursuing a case, which if prosecuted, could be one of the biggest of its kind in the country. A meeting has now been scheduled with a national expert following a visit from the British Museum earlier this month (*Sept*).

Meanwhile, two exploratory digs have now been carried out on the land, which is owned by NCC. A County Hall spokesman said “Chester Farm is a site of tremendous historical and archaeological importance. We have a responsibility to manage the site and ensure any buried remains are preserved. We have recently undertaken two very small-scale exploratory excavations on the area known to have been a Roman walled town. As a scheduled ancient monument, approval needed to be given by the secretary of state before any excavation work could take place on site. The work was done specifically to answer certain key questions about the buried archaeology and its state of preservation below the soil. This information will help us understand how best to look after it. A full report is now being compiled on the results of the dig., the findings of which will soon be made available to the public. We hope there will be further small scale excavations over the coming years and opportunities for public engagement.

Northampton Chronicle & Echo –27th September 2011

On Heritage weekend, members of the public were able to go along to Chester Farm to have a guided walk around the site. This was an excellent couple of hours when we were able to see a couple of the excavations and what had been found. The archaeology is about a good spade deep and in excellent condition. The small team who gave up their time to show us this site are to be congratulated in their presentation and the smoothness in the handover from one to the next. Not having been to Chester Farm before, NIAG last went in 2006 (*Issue 100*) I was very impressed and would have dearly liked to have explored more and seen the walled garden and the House itself. Sadly because of the fire, this was denied to us because of all the scaffolding and the inevitable Health & Safety issues. *Ed.*

Daventry’s Canal Arm moves closer

Multi million pound plans for a canal arm running into Daventry town centre have been officially submitted. The application for the 1.6-mile long route was submitted by the Daventry District Council to the WNDC.

The proposed route starts at the Eastern Way playing field, where it would link to the council’s proposed waterside marina scheme. From there the canal would go under Northern Way, pass through a small marina with a potential service building alongside, skirt around the southern tip of Daventry Country Park, and then travel vaguely parallel to the B4036 Long Buckby Road until it joins with the Grand

Union Canal. Along its route there would be six locks in two groups to cope with the changes in topography.

Chris Miller, leader of the council said: *“The canal arm and locks will be an attractive and sensitive addition to the historic canal network at Daventry and hope the application is approved. It’s great to maintain the tradition of canal building which the district has been blessed with. It will also help provide new jobs for the area. We’ve had a lot of interest expressed in the district since the new of the canal project has got around. It’s all about taking advance of market conditions of the district’s long-term benefit”*.

The application will next have to be officially checked by the WNDC to make sure it is valid. Once that happens it will be open to comments as part of the normal planning process. A decision on the canal scheme will be made by the Daventry planning committee of the WNDC, which is also set to decide on the application for the waterside and marina development planned for its Daventry terminus. The marina scheme, and associated canal, are a key part of the District Council’s vision for the future of the town centre.

Daventry Express - August 18 2011

When this scheme first ‘hit the news’ some 10 years or so ago, no-one wanted it then, they still don’t. But DDC plod on regardless. Call me a cynic if you like, but I will always maintain that if, when the Grand Union Canal was built they had wanted to take the canal into Daventry, they would have. But they didn’t because of the cost and the fact that it would have been very difficult to build as Daventry lies a hundred feet or so above the canal and costs would have been prohibitive – as they are now.

I can’t begin to think how much money has been wasted on this project in those intervening years and another thing - I thought that all quangos, which includes WNDC, were to have been scrapped by the current Government. Pigs might fly!!

Ed.



Of This and That

EMAC 82

As I write the take up on the above bi-annual conference is good. It is hoped that the weather will be kind as we make our way from Cogenhoe Village Hall to Irchester Country Park. It is pleasing to see that there will be a good turnout from NIAG.

Winter Programme

As mentioned earlier, the date of the December meeting has been changed from the 9th to the 2nd, due to a change of date by the Church after we had booked our Fridays with them way back at the start of the year! Rather than have everyone parking minutes away when there is a perfectly adequate car park to hand, the

committee took the bold decision to change the date. It is hoped that next year's December meeting will be honoured and not changed at the eleventh hour! Thankfully our speaker was able and free to change the Friday.

AGM

The papers for this important date – November 10th – are enclosed. As mentioned there will not be any spares at the meeting, so please ensure that you bring them with you to that meeting.

Subscriptions

For those who have yet to renew, a reminder is also enclosed. Please ensure that you renew your membership either before or at that meeting. This will ensure that you will still receive the NIAG Newsletter and Winter and Summer Programmes.

A Guide to the Industrial Heritage of Northamptonshire – 2nd Edition

This excellent little book is selling well and if you do not yet have your copy I will be selling them at our winter meetings. Members are able to purchase at £6 per copy. Retail price is £7.95.

Winter Programme 2011/12: Commences Friday 14th October

14th October **JW Evans – The Silver Factory** – Nick Hill
11th November **AGM – Victorian Northamptonshire – Inventions and Inventors** – Jon-Paul Carr
2nd December **Thatching** – Roger Scanlon - NOTE NEW DATE

2012

13th January **Members night**

Dates for the Diary:

15th October **EMIAAC: Heritage Day.** It is now too late to book!!
(Saturday)

Exhibitions:

Now until 23rd
December **Mapping the London Blitz:** London County Council created maps to record damage during the raids, graphically illustrating the destruction, other archive materials reveal Blitz life in London.
London Metropolitan Archives, 40 Northampton Road, London EC1 0HB. Free.



Finally

Northampton Station – redevelopment

Northampton’s station is to be redeveloped at a cost of £25 million.

Outline plans are for a new station building that would be a cornerstone for regenerating a number of brownfield sites along the River Nene in the town centre, creating a potential for 70,000 sq/m of commercial development and 4,000 new jobs.

WNDC is working in partnership with Network Rail to deliver the plan. The station’s outline design has been completed and ‘prior approval’ for the scheme has been received. Full planning permission is not required as the site is covered by NR’s permitted development rights.

Northampton’s low-height ‘shed-style’ station has long been viewed as an example of BR cost-paring policies and its replacement would be more in keeping with a large county town. With an entrance on Black Lion Hill, it would boast new facilities such as larger booking office, lifts, escalators, a larger coffee shop, multi-storey car park and increased retail activity.

In 2009/10, the station was used by 2.2 million passengers.

The Railway Magazine – October 2011

LATE NEWS

The talk on March 9th 2012 will be:

The History of Wreford’s Transport

Northampton's oldest transport company was founded in 1904 by Silvanus William Wreford and his initials can be seen on all of their vehicles today. In those days horses provided the motive power; after the Great War the first lorry was purchased, an ex-Army truck. The rest, as they say, is history; today their fleet comprises modern, state of the art tractor units with a range of trailer units.

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Next Issue: **January 2012**

Deadline for all articles and information **10th December 2011**. Anything received after this date will be held over to the next issue.

Article guidelines: Should be no more than 1½ pages long, unless article is of a special nature and accompanied by photographs or diagrams. 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, the picture should be no larger than 250,000 pixels in JPEG format and should be sent as separate attachments. 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.