



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
INDUSTRIAL, ARCHAEOLOGY  
GROUP

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NEWSLETTER



ISSUE 122 - SPRING 2012

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## **From the Editor**

This year's talks to complete the Winter season of 2011/2012 have, once again, proved to be excellent. There was the usual good mix of subjects with the members evening, then we followed that in February with Alex Warwick and Izze Thomas and their excellent presentation on Brunel. The fact that the SS Great Eastern was built in London, on the Isle of Dogs is amazing. How I wish that my father had had the exploring urge to look at London from the River and to view what must have still been at this site in my childhood - missed opportunities spring to mind. We ended the season with a talk on the rescue and restoration of the last Allchin Steam Roller in the county. I learn that one of our members has given the group some valuable items which will enable them to continue the restoration. This is excellent news and well done to that member for contacting Peter to ascertain details of how to contact the group.

Thankfully the snow that was forecast to come at a set time, came and soon went. Let's see no more of it and get Spring firmly on the go. Daffodils, crocus and snowdrops all shooting their way to give a delightful display of colour in the dark soil. It must have been cold because a Fieldfare dropped in to eat the holly berries on the hedge at the front - a beautiful bird and quite a bit larger than the Blackbird.

The committee and a few others have been working hard to produce a good programme for the coming Summer months. The topics are diverse and there are a few that take us out of the county, including the annual Rail Tour which is always an enjoyable day out. As always the weather plays an important part, so its fingers crossed for dry and sunny days and evenings. The programme is enclosed with this newsletter. Look forward to seeing you.

The Gazetteer has been selling very well, have you got your copy yet? Members can purchase this excellent reference book for £6 plus £2 p&p from the Newsletter Editor. As ever, a small supply will be taken to the walks, so if you wish to get a copy then, please ensure that you bring the correct money as it is more than likely I may not have much change on me!

This is a year for many anniversaries of an important nature. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee is a time of celebration. Titanic - it's 100 years almost to the day to the ship's fatal sinking as I write this introduction, 200 years ago was the assassination of Prime Minister Spencer Percival, an MP for Northampton. Whilst mentioning these we must not forget that 116 years ago saw the first radio signal transmission, Last up, whilst not exactly an anniversary, there is the Summer Olympics, this year being hosted by London, with events being held around the country. Quite a year one way and another.

*Jane Waterfield*

## 2011/2012 WINTER PROGRAMME

### Reports

#### J W Evans, The Silver Factory or How to rescue a factory - October 2011

On the 14 October, NIAG was treated to a talk by Nick Hill, of English Heritage. His talk was about the history and rescue of the J W Evans Silverware manufactory, on Albion Street in the Jewellery Quarter of Birmingham, and he was the project manager for the conservation work.

The Jewellery Quarter is world famous as an urban industrial centre of jewellery and metalware production. Only 15 minutes walk from Birmingham city centre, there is a marked contrast between the swish offices of the city centre and the tightly packed factory buildings of the Jewellery Quarter. This area originally began as a late C18/early C19 development in a relatively rural area for the more prosperous metalworking masters, merchants and professionals who wanted to escape the increasingly industrialised city centre. Starting around St Paul's Church area, construction then spread to the area to the north west with a mixture of both residential and industrial buildings. The area gradually became a hub of jewellery and silverware manufacturing, partly due to the establishment of the Birmingham Assay Office, and of important plating and pen nib factories there in the 1830s. By the mid

C19 the Quarter had become a network of trades all contributing to the jewellery trade. Expansion of the Quarter continued into the early C20 with the industry reaching its zenith in the 1900s.

In the 1990s the former Royal Commission of Historic Monuments undertook an architectural survey of the Jewellery Quarter. It was during this survey that the manufactory of J W Evans was discovered. It was listed grade II\* as it was an important survival of a completely intact silverware factory. The site consists of the main house (a former town house converted into part of the manufactory) and workshop ranges behind. All the tools, dies, and machinery are still present inside, along with a complete archive, making for an atmospheric site.



Evans Silver Factory - Stamps  
©Steve Miles 2009

The site started around 1835 as a row of four lower middle class terraced houses with open yards behind and was numbered 54-57 Albion Street. During the 1870s two storey workshops were built in the back yards and, later on, the remaining open spaces there were filled in. Interestingly, bay windows were added to the front of the building after it had become a factory to allow more light in. Jenkin Evans, who had started as an apprentice die sinker, set up business in no. 54 in 1881 as a die sinker, cutting patterns from steel blocks for the manufacture of jewellery and silverware. Over time, by the 1900s, he was able to buy out the rest of the site as the business had expanded into producing stampings and pressings for table silverware. Solid silver items, electroplated silverware and hollowware like sauce boats, jugs and plates were produced. During 1893-5 about 60 workers were employed. Evans and his family originally lived on the premises, but moved away later as the concern expanded.

The site stayed in family ownership for three generations throughout the C20. Unfortunately, by the end of the century, silverware had fallen out of fashion whilst foreign producers were undercutting prices. Tony Evans, Jenkin's grandson, continued the firm but by 2005 it had shrunk to 5 employees and was operating only sporadically. It finally closed early in 2008.

The process of manufacture at J W Evans remained mostly unchanged up to the end. Although there was some mechanisation, hand craft still accounted for a major proportion of the work. The first stage was die sinking



Evans Silver Factory - Fly press room with crash decking ©Steve Miles 2009

which involved cutting detail into a block of steel to produce the die. This was done by hand, however in the 1900s Jenkin imported an automatic die cutting machine which operated until World War Two. This machine is still present in the works. Once the die was ready, a positive would be formed by building clay around the die, then pouring an alloy into the die. Once ready, the die and positive would be placed into a stamp.

A thin sheet of silver was then placed on the die in the stamping machine with the positive located above and the basic shape of the product would be formed through stamping. The item was then moved upstairs to the fly press shop to cut off/out extraneous bits. This work was mainly carried out by women.

Originally silversmithing was not carried out at J W Evans, with items being sent out to other workshops for this process. Later however, the firm started to employ silversmiths to connect parts. Finally, the finished object would be polished at the factory. Electroplating was never undertaken at the factory – this was also carried out elsewhere. The company never sold direct to the public, the company’s market being trade wholesale. Items were made under licence to firms like Mappin and Webb, who used J.W Evans to produce silverware for them.

As the firm was shrinking by 2005, there were a number of attempts to save the works. The Birmingham Conservation Trust and the National Trust both looked at the site but these investigations came to nothing, with the site closing in early 2008. English Heritage bought the site from Tony Evans on the 1st April 2008 with Tony being a consultant for the project. The philosophy behind the conservation works was to keep as much of the atmosphere as possible and English Heritage were keen to preserve the ramshackle appearance of the site. Nothing was to be removed, with the contents left in place during repair and conservation works. This was not the easiest site to work in, cramped and hemmed in as it was by other buildings. Nick called it the “...most awkward site it has been my pleasure to work in.”

The buildings were re-roofed, structural repairs carried out and new patent glazing was used in roof lights. Crash decks were installed inside to protect the contents. The wall surfaces were conserved, keeping the wallpaper and the flaky look of the paintwork. The challenging part was the machinery and contents as it was decided not to touch anything more than necessary. One set of the stamps was restored to working order and the electrics were refurbished, with the original switches and conduits being kept in place. The showroom was recreated with objects made in the works. The philosophical approach to conservation was taken to its logical conclusion with arguments appearing about whether it was right or not to keep the new dust caused by the recent works.

In all, the works cost £2 million. The site is open to the public on a limited basis and it is hoped that in the future it can be passed onto a trust to run. This was an unusual example of industrial preservation carried out by a public body, rather than by a small volunteer group or local authority body. Thanks must go to Nick for giving the talk as it was interesting to hear about it from someone who had been deeply involved in the process.

*Steve Miles*



## Thatching - December 2011

Roger has been training would-be thatcher's since 1993. He gave us a lively talk on the types of thatching and materials used. Using old and new photographs he illustrated how the basic utilitarian original style has in some places evolved into an elaborate and fussy form. He has the opinion that the professional thatcher as we know today did not exist until post 1900. Most roofs would have been repaired by a local man (possibly a general agricultural labourer) who would have had the experience of thatching his employers' hay ricks.

Thatching in the U.K. was predominately used across East Anglia, the Midlands and the West Country.

- Water reed (commonly referred to as Norfolk reed) was used in East Anglia and Hampshire with an expected life of 60 years.
- Comb wheat straw; the West Country with a life of 55 years.
- Long straw – used locally with a life of 25 years.

He pointed out that you can thatch with any material available, such as leaves and even seaweed (in Denmark), which dries on the outer surface like leather. I think it would be a bit smelly initially! The life expectancy of any thatch is dependent upon



Thatched Cottage, Spratton

©Jane Waterfield 2008

the position/orientation of the building, i.e. airy and open without over hanging trees. An east/west orientation is the ideal, providing an even exposure to the sun.

Today's farming techniques and crop varieties do not produce a long enough straw. However there are two county growers, who produce the old stemmed types – about 1 metre high – which is cut by a binder and ripened in the field in stooks (small bundles) stacked upright for two weeks. If left longer they become too brittle to use. This simple long straw form is the traditional local material and put on in two coats. The first coat is tied to the roof lathes and the second outer coat is stapled into the first using a split then bent hazel stick. On an average roof the weight of straw is approximately three tons. Using traditional long straw, both the main incline of the roof and also the ridge can be thatched with the same material since the straw itself is supple enough to bend over the ridge. This format would produce a simple flush ridge, however, the modern preference is for a patterned block ridge, often decorated at the edges with split hazel strips, stapled in. This two coat system allows the top coat to be replaced/repared without disturbing the lower coat and therefore retaining the integrity of the roof whilst any work is carried out. One of the drawbacks to long straw is that the birds etc. can readily penetrate it. That is why we often see it with a chicken wire covering.

Water reed, because of its durability and therefore its cost effectiveness, is becoming more used locally. Roger voiced his concern here that English Heritage who are involved with the authenticity of styles and materials used in refurbishments of many of the counties pre-1919 buildings, do not realise that by putting water reed thatch onto a local building previously long-straw thatched replaces much of the 300-400 year old timber roof members. You therefore end up with a totally 21st century roof on an old building. A reed thatch is laid in a single 12 inch deep layer. Reed is too brittle to be bent over the ridge of the roof, therefore straw is used and hence the now familiar block ridge with fancy shaped edge. A bundle of water reed is 3 hands in circumference and approx. 1500 bundles are required on an average roof. Each bundle would require a growing area of 10 ft. x 10 ft. and covers one sq. ft. of roof.

The talk was illustrated using old photographs of buildings (many long gone) in Spratton, but also modern Dutch buildings using a range of designs. It seems that some European architects are beginning to incorporate thatch as a current modern material.

*Ron Hanson*





## **Members Night - January 2012**

As always this was another interesting night of input from our members. We kicked off the evening with the now annual trip through photographs of the summer walks of 2011. Through wet and shine it was nice to go back to those places visited including the photo which Barry mentioned in his report on the rail tour and which caused such consternation to its taker at the time.

Judith Hodginson took us on a fascinating insight into 'the recording of un-modernised housing in and around Northampton in 1985-6, those occupied by shoe factory owners and workers'. Geoffrey, as always, gave us an entertaining and informative talk on mechanised olive pressing in Spain which was another fascinating insight into what can be found in foreign parts.

To end, Peter spoke about his findings in Thailand when he visited his daughter last February. His report with a couple of photos follows.

### **Aspects of Industry in Thailand - Peter Perkins**

In February 2011, Peter and Sandra Perkins spent two weeks in Chiang Mai, Thailand's second city located some 450 miles north of Bangkok. Peter's daughter Lauren teaches there and had lined up some examples of local industrial activity.

The first highlight was small local brickworks located in the village where Lauren lives on the outskirts of Chiang Mai. It produces grey-coloured blocks not dissimilar in size and colour to breeze blocks. It was not possible to see how the bricks were moulded but thousands were laid out on the ground drying in the sun. There was no conventional brick kiln as we would know it, just a tin-covered shed which had half-demolished walls with signs of burning and a fresh load waiting to be fired.

Returning from a trip up Thailand's highest mountain (in an old Peugeot 405 - a

story in itself!) the night was spent in a hotel resort at Sanpatong. This was at the site of a tobacco curing plant which operated for about 40 years from the 1950s, apparently set up by the British. About 50 tobacco curing barns remain, 18 of which have now been converted into accommodation. Each barn was some 8 metres square and 10 metres high with a clerestory style roof. Some



Tobacco Curing Barns, Thailand

©Peter Perkins 2011

barns were constructed with a timber frame infilled with panels of woven bamboo covered with plaster or mud. Corrugated iron had been used to patch up areas that had deteriorated. Other barns were of brick with holes positioned at regular intervals, presumably to take the wooden beams onto which the tobacco leaves were hung. It looks as if they were ‘flue-cured’ barns with curing being carried out using heat, as there were two holes at the base on one side of each of the unused barns. Each hole would have contained a pipe connected to a heat exchanger standing on the floor of the barn and outside there would have been a firewood stove to provide the heat.

Some of the traditional local industries seen were clearly set up to draw in tourists. They included a parasol factory where wooden-framed parasols were being manufactured and tourists could have their own designs hand-painted onto the parasol. In another example, weaving looms had been set up in a modern factory-cum-shop where a variety of the resulting textile products were on sale.

Transport in Thailand’s cities is an assault on the senses. Although Chiang Mai does not have quite the chaos produced by the cars in Bangkok, this is compensated by the numbers of tuk-tuks (motorised rickshaws), songthaews (basically vans with bench seats in the back which act as a cross between a bus and a taxi) and motor bikes/mopeds which come at you from all directions! Out in the country, however, driving is a much more pleasant experience (as long as you watch out for erring motor bikes). An impressive feature are the milestones (or perhaps they should be called kilometre-stones) which stand majestically by every roadside shining white in the mid-day sun.



Thai Milestone

©Peter Perkins 2011

Along with bicycle-driven water pumps in the grounds of a Buddhist monastery and a man trying to work out which wire goes where among a myriad of electrical cables

up a pole in a Bangkok street, these were just a selection of views of Thailand with an industrial twist.

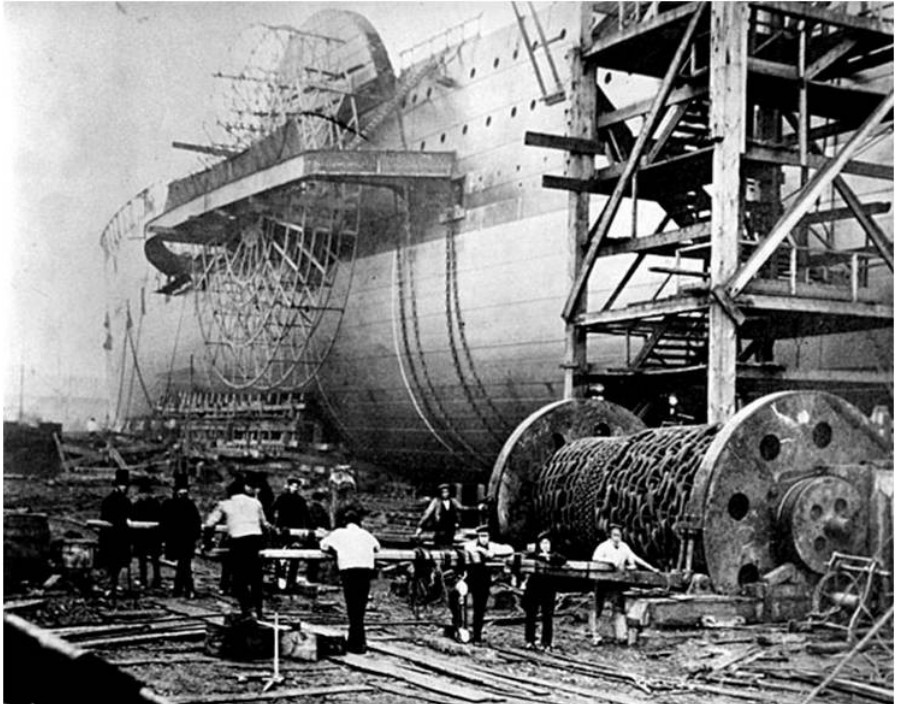
*Perhaps we should persuade Peter to tell us about the Peugeot and the trip to Thailand's highest mountain. However, if you have a tale to tell and photos to show then please let Peter know for next year's members evening.*

*Jane W*



**Brunel's 'Great Eastern' - February 2011**

Our speakers were Isambard Thomas and Alexandra Warwick, the former a great-great-great-grandson of Isambard Kingdom Brunel who now lives beside the stretch of the Thames where just over 150 years ago Brunel's 'Great Babe' was built, and Alexandra sporting even more illustrious connections as the daughter of NIAG members. Their talk began with a brief resume of Brunel's early life and career, and emphasising another of his Thames connections: the tunnel built by father Marc between 1824 and 1843, with IK Brunel assisting from 1826, well-placed to perfect



the skills which still mark out engineers – an ability to deliver work late, over-budget and not to the original specification.

The Great Eastern's logic was for it to dominate the trade to the Orient and Australia, a vast floating coal mine able to journey without intermediate fuelling stops and with existing ships on the routes becoming mere feeders to its destination ports. 693 feet long, not to be surpassed until the White Star Line's 704 foot Oceanic launched in 1899, and powered by propeller, paddle and sail. With IK's reputation for showmanship and the 1851 Great Exhibition bringing together the key participants in the ship's story, it is fitting that there was always an element of the Vaudeville about the tub. With IK and the ship's builder, John Scott Russell, at the forefront of their professions there is also the engineering story of double hull and transverse bulkheads that can be told. But it soon becomes clear that the main story is of what went wrong.

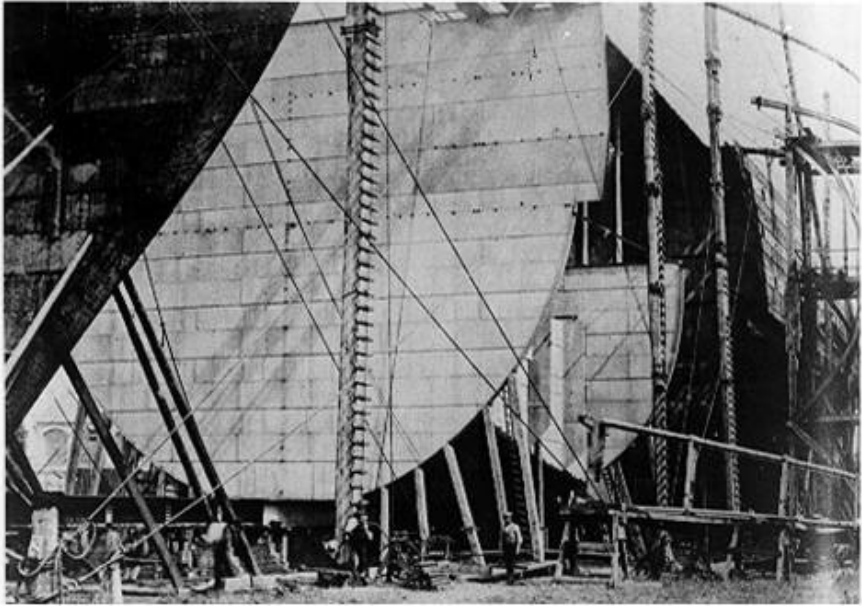
Russell's tender of £377k to build the ship was low enough to get the project underway, with the keel laid in May 1854, but also low enough to ensure Scott Russell's bankruptcy in February 1856, requiring a string of manoeuvres to keep the ship out of reach of his creditors. Brunel had specified that the ship be built in a dock, but the cost of building such a dock was clipped from Scott Russell's tender and instead the ship was built sideways on to the river, and only accommodated by Scott Russell taking over the neighbouring Napier's shipyard. This then leads to the saga of trying to get the ship launched, with Brunel keen to avoid the public's gaze for this slow and risky process and the company directors keen to flog tickets to the spectacle. The remains of the slipway are preserved beside the river.

The maiden voyage was not without incident: an exploding funnel killed five whilst the ship steamed past Dungeness on 8th September 1859; but the strength of the ship's construction saw it reach Weymouth on schedule two days later. Less sturdy was Brunel's health, and he died on 15 September, aged 53.

The Great Eastern never made it to Australia, instead making several crossings to America, a trade to which it was not well suited. With a capacity for 4,000 passengers it rarely carried more than a few hundred. The mass market was for emigrants, most of whom could not afford its style nor need its pace; whilst as a one-of-a-kind it could only ever make singular voyages during which things tended to go wrong requiring time-out for refits, hence no reliable schedule was possible nor could a regular crew be formed. Even the Captaincy was a revolving door appointment – Harrison, Vine Hall, Carnegie, Thompson, Kennedy, Walker and Paton each holding the post in turn across the first three years.

A second career as a cable layer saw out the 1860s and got the ship as far as Bombay in 1870, but the launch of the Faraday in 1874, purpose built for the task, led to the Great Eastern being abandoned at Milford Haven, where she provided a nice stable platform for Frederick Appleby to construct a dry dock around her. Finally the ship

had a dry dock big enough to accommodate her. It was then discovered that the sea locks were too narrow to permit her to exit. Removing the paddle boxes solved the impasse but also removed the cost saving achieved by using the ship as a base to build the dock around.



Finally a hero arrived to make a profit from the Great Eastern. Louis Cohen had sought to buy the ship at auction but, by a stroke of good fortune, had been out-bid by London Traders Ltd who wanted to use the ship as a coaling hulk at Gibraltar. It would take time for them to get the necessary permits in place, so would Louis Cohen like to hire the boat in the meantime? Cohen was managing director of Lewis's department store and wanted the ship as a floating advertisement and amusement attraction for his business in Liverpool. Whilst being positioned in the Mersey the ship's starboard anchor fell onto the tug 'Wrestler' which thereby became the tenth vessel to be sunk or seriously damaged by getting into a fight with the Great Eastern.

Despite a very successful 1886 season on the Mersey for Cohen and Lewis's, London Traders Ltd had been added to the tally of companies that had gone bust whilst owning the Great Eastern (they sound to have been number seven on the list) and the ship was again put up for auction, and bought for scrap by Henry Bath & Sons who became the final losers when the ship proved a tough old bird to break up, taking eighteen months to succumb to the wrecker's ball.

*Matthew Nayler*

Pictures of The Great Eastern courtesy of Alex Warwick

## News Items and updates

### **Former shoe factory at Desborough**

Kettering Borough Council has finally given the go-ahead to demolish the 18-bay, 2-storey-plus-basement former shoe factory in Gladstone Street Desborough in order that Tesco can build a supermarket on the site. Most recently used by RS Lawrence, leather and shoe component suppliers, the main part of the factory dates from at least the 1870s although there are suggestions that it may have been built earlier. It is notable as it represents one of the longest shoe factory buildings in the county constructed in a single phase – See NIAG Gazetteer 2nd Edition - Site 98.

The decision comes after a long battle, with objections from Desborough residents, as well as from Sainsburys who wanted to build a supermarket on the outskirts of the town. NIAG wrote a letter of objection too. The decision is perhaps not surprising as Kettering Borough Council themselves own the site and virtually invited Tesco to put in an application. However, there may still be delays; there is a covenant preventing the site being used for retail purposes, placed on the site by earlier owners Desborough Co-op, which the Council now has to overturn!!

### **Former Glendon & Rushton Station**

Members may recall that a group calling itself the Friends of Glendon & Rushton Station have pledged to restore the derelict station on the Midland Main Line at Rushton and turn it into a museum. Despite having to give up renting the building and being told by Kettering Borough Council that planning permission for a museum is unlikely to be granted, the group is still hopeful of restoring the station! It seems that there is now pressure from the council on the owners to take action to stop the building deteriorating and the Friends may still have a role in helping to achieve this. It is all rather unfortunate as the Grade II listed structure is deteriorating by the week.

*information from Peter Perkins*

### **Kingsthorpe Tram Shelter**

The shelter has now been given a ‘make-over’ by residents and highways contractor MG-WSP. First mentioned in the last Newsletter [121], the group completed the work to improve traffic flow at the Cock Hotel junction last year and has now helped restore the nearby Memorial Island landmark to its former glory. The shelter has been painted red and silver after it was prepared by MGWSP and PGR Construction. On close inspection it looks very good and one can just about make out some wording on some of the ironwork. This says ‘Rowell London’. Whether you like the silver is a personal thing - I personally think the scheme should have been black and red. The red is rather pinkish and not dark enough. However, the main thing is that this piece of history has been restored and complements the memorial to the fallen on this island which forms an oasis in amongst the heavy traffic which uses this junction.

*Information from Northampton Chronicle & Echo - April 3rd 2012  
and Jane Waterfield*



Kingsthorpe restored tram shelter

(c) Terry Waterfield 2012



## Miscellany of Items of Interest

### **Fishmarket 'not of historical interest'**

English Heritage have said Northampton's Fishmarket building should not be listed to protect it from demolition. Campaigners fighting to save the 73 year old building had appealed to the national conservation body to list the structure. But the organisation said it was not of significant architectural or historic value to be listed. In a report on the building which has been seen by the Chronicle & Echo, Rebecca Carter from EH said the Fishmarket might be of local interest, but was not of significant national importance. She said "*The Fishmarket is a distinctive building the most notable feature being the use of tiles around the entrances and the curving of the walls at strategic points. However, it is not recommended for listing. The building is modest in design and does not hold the special architectural or historical interest necessary to meet the criteria for designation.*"

But despite the group confirming the building should not be listed, they have said they would like to see it saved from demolition if an alternative site for a new bus station could be found. A spokesman for the organisation said: "*We have consistently advised that alternative locations should be considered for the new bus station. The Sheep Street site is a valuable part of the heritage of Northampton and if the demolition of the Fishmarket is sought, a clear justification demonstrating why it is necessary will be required.*"

The Fishmarket, then known as the Market Hall, was built in Sheep Street, close to the town's Market Square, in 1939. Its heyday came between the 1950s and 1970s, when more than 50 stalls traded there. But in 2004, Northampton Borough Council reported that the building had become little used and was having to be subsidised

by tax payers at a rate of £73,000 a year. When the building finally closed as a market in September 2006, it had only one remaining staff. The building was then converted into the Fishmarket art gallery, which continued operating in the building until earlier this month. The artists who used the Fishmarket are now in the process of moving to a new building in Guildhall Road.

*Northampton Chronicle & Echo – March 20th 1012*

### **Old Wolverton Canal Aquaduct update**

A £300,000 renovation project on the canal gateway into Northamptonshire is well under way with specialist abseilers on site to paint the 200-year-old aqueduct. British Waterways is co-ordinating the works at the Iron Trunk Aqueduct, at Old Wolverton, which marks the boundary of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. The careful work on the aquaduct, which carries canal traffic over the river Ouse, requires a team of abseilers to coat the metalwork red, grey and white. As well as removing graffiti and redundant gas pipes, and putting up new information boards, the project has included education work with local community groups and schools.

James Clifton, enterprise manager for British Waterways said: *“It’s a hugely important part of the canal system and was the M1 of its day. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument of importance and age and these works come close its 200th anniversary. The project is going really well and it’s been great engaging with the local community. We’ve been lucky with the weather; as the conditions have to be just right for painting. It’s important to carry on investing in our canals so the community can continue to discover the heritage on our doorstep.”*

The project has been funded by a number of charities and organisations, including large donations from the Big Lottery Fund and Waste Recycling Environment, as well as Northamptonshire County Council and South Northamptonshire. It comes ahead of the British Waterways’ bid to become a charity later this summer. Mr Clifton added: *“This is exactly the sort of project that we want to be carrying out as a charity, looking after our heritage, environment and working with local communities.”*

*Northampton Chronicle & Echo – 6th March 2012*

### **Brockhall Coach works**

A picture taken in 1967 of the above company recently appeared in the Northampton Chronicle & Echo’s Looking Back section.

Laura Desborough, a member of the family wrote: *“I am very proud to say the this small business is still up and running in Clare Street. It is owned and run by the Desborough family. Brockhall Coach Works was established by our grandfather, Harry Desborough, some 90 years ago in the 1920s. He then passed it on to his son Paul, also known as Des, and it is now run by Paul’s two sons, Lee and Earle. The name ‘Coach works’ came about due to the amount of hand-painted vehicles that our grandfather and father painted. Now of course that is no longer the case and we have a modern up-to-date facility with the latest paint technologies available,*



*but of course we do have that special personal touch and pride in our work to keep the good name of Brockhall Coach Works going as our family has done in the past". Paul Desborough adds: "Brockhall Coach works was started in Hood Street and the firm's name came from Brockhall Parade which ran from Hood Street to Cowper Street. My father then moved to Clare Street. I worked with my father in 1946. He passed away in 1956, then I took the business over till I retired in 1997, then my two sons, Lee and Earle Desborough, took the business over. They have been working there for over 25 years. So in a nutshell that's 90 years of the Brockhall Coach Works".*

*Northampton Chronicle and Echo – February 28th 2012*

### **Barwell Hagers Eagle Foundry, Northamptonshire**

This firm were responsible for the cast iron conservatory that sits above a cruciform grotto in the garden. In this case we have been able to establish a definite date of c1830-1833 for the mark. However, it is again possible that this company (either slightly earlier or subsequently) was responsible for other structures within the garden. We do know that they had a long association with nearby Wrest Park. Any catalogue or account books from this period – up to around 1880 – for the Eagle Foundry would therefore be of great interest to me.

[www.imagesofengland.org.uk/details/default.aspx?id=414691&mode=quick](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/details/default.aspx?id=414691&mode=quick)

*AIA Bulletin Spring 2012*

Contact details if you can assist are:

Victoria Hunns - email: [terre.du.rocher@gmail.com](mailto:terre.du.rocher@gmail.com)

### **Metal Theft of a different sort!**

Metal theft is often in the news. Now there is a distressing report from Cheshire Record Office on the theft of almost 30 parish micro-film reels from their searchroom. They would like them back (*too right they do*). The time and effort needed for stricter monitoring of the issue of microfilms in response to this selfish act leave staff with less time to deliver their regular service to users.

*BALH - Local History News No.102 Winter 2012*

*Not the best of news I have to admit. It is to be hoped that there is some kind of back-up system such as original hand written records. No doubt this will have knock-on repercussions for all RO users in the country. This begs the question, why is it that a few always spoil it for the majority? Ed.*

### **London Bridge's 'protected' roof to be demolished**

Permission has been granted to Network Rail by Southwark Council to demolish the overall roof above the terminal platforms at London Bridge station, even though it is Grade 2 listed and must therefore be re-erected elsewhere.

Railworld, at Peterborough, has offered the trainshed a home, but admits that it has no funds to transport and erect it. The roof has to be replaced as part of the Thameslink redevelopment and will be replaced by ultra-modern canopies reflecting

the new Shard skyscraper, next to which the station lies.

*The Railway magazine: March 2012*

### **West Coast chaos after loco derails at Bletchley**

Services on the West Coast Main Line were thrown into chaos on 3rd February after a Class 90 was derailed at Bletchley. Although the loco is a Freightliner, it was on hire to Virgin Trains and was being driven light engine by a Virgin driver following maintenance at Crewe. It was en route to Wembley to work VT's regular Friday-only loco-hauled service.

The 84-tonne Bo-Bo was crossing from the slow to fast lines at around 02.30 when it came to grief. It managed to pass through the pillars of Bletchley flyover without striking them but wrecked a set of points and brought down the overhead wires before coming to rest some 100 yards beyond the flyover, fouling both fast lines!

Luckily the accident happened within sight and earshot of the Bletchley signaller, enabling swift action to be taken to halt London Midland's 01.34 Euston-Milton Keynes EMU, which was approaching the scene from the south. Initial indications from Network Rail and RAIB are that the locomotive was travelling significantly faster than the permitted 15mph speed over the junction. Such was the damage to the infrastructure that the Friday morning peak became a shambles and led to Virgin trains services being split, some starting/terminating at Milton Keynes or Rugby and others operating as shuttle services between Tring and Euston.

London Midland trains used Northampton as its southernmost point with bus connections laid on to Wellingborough or Luton Airport Parkway. The line was reopened in time for the Monday morning peak with a speed restriction, but the track had to be plain-lined because of the damage to the pointwork. RAIB is holding a full investigation!!

### **York South turntables unearthed.**

Excavations have revealed the turntable pits of the former York South roundhouse, which was demolished almost half a century ago. The former North Eastern Railway roundhouses – one of which was officially used for several years by Midland Railway locomotives – were demolished in 1963 and filled with rubble. The archaeological dig has been carried out in connection with Network Rail plans to remove the turning triangle south of the station and develop the land for a new training and operations facility. To compensate for the loss of the triangle, the National Railway Museum is said to be considering construction of a new turntable in the city as the tracks leading to the one in the Great Hall are not accessible to the NRM 24 hours a day.

### **Elsecar scraps ex-Nene Valley Avonside 0-6-0ST**

Avonside 0-6-0ST 1945/1926 has been scrapped by the Elsecar Heritage Railway. In late January, Elsecar's website reported that the redundant frames and boiler had been sold 'for recycling'. The connecting rods are reportedly sold 'to a steam loco preservationist for use on another restoration project'.

The loco was last steamed at the Nene Valley Railway in the early 1970s. Following

withdrawal, it was displayed at Peterborough NVR station for several years, then moved to Wansford. The railway sold it to an NVR volunteer in early 2006, who started restoration, although progress received a setback in August 2006 when brass and copper fittings were stolen at Wansford. The loco was subsequently sold in component form to Elsecar, which intended to use parts to help restoration of its Avonside 0-6-0ST 1917/1923 Earl Fitzwilliam. The funds raised from 'recycling' 1945/1926 will go towards financing heavy maintenance of Peckett 0-6-0ST Mardy No.1 in preparation for the forthcoming season.

*The above three items from The Railway magazine – April 2012*

### **Rushton station**

A plaque was unveiled at the station on March 17th, to mark the 21st anniversary of the rescue of the Midland Railway station from demolition.

*Rail magazine - April 4/17th 2012*



## **Of This and That**

### **Summer Programme 2012**

This is enclosed with the Newsletter. Hopefully the weather will play it's part this year and we can all enjoy the Friday walks and visits in the dry. Please also note that some of these are on other days to the normal Friday.

### **Dates for the Diary: 2012**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 28th April | SERIAC 2012 – To be held at St Bartholomew's School, Newbury, hosted by Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group. Further details on <a href="http://www.biag.orrng.uk">www.biag.orrng.uk</a> |
| 6th May    | NIAG Summer Programme of Walks and Visits begins.   |
| 19th May   | Industrial Heritage Day (EMIAC 83) - Trent 150: Hosted by the Railway & Canal Historical Society, East Midlands Group.  |

### **'Urban Explorers' - a possible problem for us all!!**

Our friends at Transport for London have let me know that there is a group of people who are causing a lot of headaches by going into places they shouldn't without prior consent. I am sure you will agree that this scenario has caused many serious problems. It could also be argued that these people are putting themselves at risk and in danger, plus the fact that visits from groups, such as ours, could be spoiled in the future with opportunities to visit sites of interest lost.

*Editor*

## **Number crunching**

Once again I have located information in the form of numbers and will be bringing you facts and figures from a variety of sources.

\*\*\*\*\*

A new passenger concourse has opened at London's Kings Cross rail terminus, with an eye-catching semicircular steel and glass roof. Over 1,000 ft of steel, one million specially made heritage bricks, five million ceramic tiles and five million metres of cabling were used in the construction, and more than 5,000 people worked on the £500m project.

*Engineering & Technology, April 2012*

A grant of £4.6 million has been awarded from the Heritage Lottery Fund to Bletchley Park to help restore the code-breaking huts and create a visitor centre.

There are 12,000 burial records from the town of Corby in Northamptonshire now available to browse on the web at [www.deceasedonline.com](http://www.deceasedonline.com)

£2,500 is the guide price at auction of a telegram sent from the rescue ship *Carpathia* by a survivor of the RMS *Titanic* in 1912.

### **Salt Workers:**

In 1800, 54,100 tons of rock salt and 142,475 tons of white salt were shipped down the River Weaver.

In 1844, 91,693 tons of rock salt and 461,419 tons of white salt were shipped down the River Weaver.

There were 60 salt works in Cheshire in the early 1850s.

At Northwich in 1852, 1,500 men tended the salt pans; they each earned 2s 9d per day.

The Winsford Rock Salt Mine alone produced over one million tons of salt from 1844 to 1892.

### **Bike makers:**

The Premier Cycle Works at Coventry covered three acres and employed over 500 people in 1891.

The front wheel of an average Penny Farthing measured 48in in diameter while the back wheel was only 16 in.

In 1878 Daniel Rudge took out Patent 526 for ball bearings, enabling him to produce the first fast racing bikes.

5,000 people attended the James Starley memorial unveiling at Coventry in 1884.

By the 1890s Coventry had the largest bicycle industry in the world, employing over 40,000 workers.

*[Interestingly the James Starley's factory's site is now home to the Museum of British Road Transport]*

### **Shipbuilders:**

36,000 was the peak employment figure, from 1919, for the Belfast shipyards.

3 million rivets is the approximate number that were used to build *Titanic*.

11,209 was the world record for the number of rivets driven by one man in a single day. It was set by a John Moir of the Workman Clark shipyard in 1918.

Only three of the four funnels on *Titanic* worked, the fourth just made the ship look more impressive!

1,974,138 is the amazing total tonnage of the 247 ships built in Belfast between 1900 and 1913.

5.8 is the percentage of ships over 100 tons built worldwide from 1900 to 1913 that were made in Belfast.

*Taken from Who Do You Think You Are magazines - December 2011, January, March & April 2012*

### **Archive images**

For those of you who like browsing the ‘net’ and who are interested in all things to do with the Railways, there is a new web-site to browse.

Images of original architectural drawings, such as the Forth Bridge and Paddington station, have been captured and published for the first time on a new Network Rail virtual archive that links 19th century engineering with 21st century technology.

By accessing website [www.networkrail.co.uk/virtualarchive](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/virtualarchive), visitors can chart the history of significant structures of many main line stations. The archive holds records by the most famous railway engineers including Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Robert Stephenson, Joseph Locke and William Henry Barlow.

There are almost five million records held by NR and it is hoped to publish new images and documents on a regular basis. They hope that this will a great resource for enthusiasts, historians, architects and students, allowing people to learn more about how the railways made Britain what it is today. Some records date back before the railways arrived - the 1680s at Charing Cross, for example, with Sir Christopher Wren’s signature. The drawings signed by Brunel of Box Tunnel show exactly how that tunnel was constructed and this is still important to the running of the railway today.

*The Railway Magazine - May 2012*

*So enjoy - as they say. Ed*



## **Quick glance guide to the 2012 summer walks and visits**

4th May	Ise Valley walk at Isham
11th May	Scotts of Thrapston
18th May	Wicksteed Park Trains, Kettering
19th May	EMIAC 83 - 'Trent 150' - Trent Station 1862-1968
27th May	Chasewater Light Railway and Museum
1st June	Glendon Railway Walk
8th June	Wakerley Ironstone Walk
13th June	Kettering Town Walk
20th June	NIAG Railtour 2012 - NIAG goes to the seaside!
29th June	Northampton's Boot & Shoe Quarter - 2
6th July	Braunston & Wolfhampcote
11th July	Moira Furnace & Marston's Brewery
20th July	Cogenhoe walk
25th July	Carpetbagger Aviation Musuem, Harrington

NB: Some of the above take place during the day. Please check your programme.



### **And Finally:**

#### **Death of a commentator**

For those of you who have attended various steam rallies throughout the county will be saddened, I am sure, to learn of the death of James Butlin at the age of 48. James was a key figure at many steam rallies and was well known as the voice in the commentator's box at many steam rallies including Rushden Cavalcade, Hollowell and Earls Barton. James worked for Northamptonshire County Council Highways and Transport Dept. and also as a Specials Inspector for Northants Police.

As a special tribute to James, Allchin No.1546 of 1912 Rebel led his funeral cortege for the last stage of its journey to St Peter's Church, Irthlingborough, followed by classic bikes, cars, military vehicles and a Fowler showman's engine.

*Old Glory magazine – April 2012*

*This must have been quite a sight and I am sure many will miss his vast knowledge of the many, many vehicles at these rallies. He was certainly an entertaining commentator.*

Disclaimer.

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## NIAG Committee

- President: Geoffrey Starmer, 34 The Crescent, Northampton, NN1 4SB
- Chairman & Secretary: Peter Perkins, Eastfields Farmhouse, Manor Road, Rushton, Kettering, NN14 1RH  
secretary@northants-iag.org.uk
- Treasurer: Terry Waterfield, 6 Bakers Lane, Norton, Daventry, NN11 2EL – 01327 312850  
treasurer@northants-iag.org.uk
- Web site: Terry Waterfield
- Members: Mick Dix, Ron Hanson, Steve Miles, Matthew Nayler, David Waller.

**Web Site:** [northants-iag.org.uk](http://northants-iag.org.uk)

## Newsletter Editor

Mrs Jane S Waterfield, 6 Bakers Lane, Norton, Daventry NN11 2EL  
Tel/Fax: 01327 312850 - e.mail: [newsletter@northants-iag.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@northants-iag.org.uk)

## Newsletter:

Next Issue: **July 2012**

Deadline for all articles and information **10th June 2012**. 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.