



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE'S INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

NEWSLETTER



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Northamptonshire Industrial Archaeology Group

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Photograph front cover: Model of Northampton c.1610 outside
Northampton Castle Station

© Jane Waterfield 2015

From the Editor

Recently there have been a few stories in the papers which have caught my eye involving tales of animals. Apparently in Australia a sheep shearer was almost given the ‘heave-ho’ because he had apparently ‘sworn’ at some sheep he had been shearing! A complaint was made about the verbal abuse ‘offending’ the said sheep. The case collapsed when it was realised that the footage of the sheep being abused would not be legally admissible. The owner is said to say that he still hasn’t had a sheep go to him to complain, nor did they look offended after they had been shorn. Meanwhile on these shores police in their infinite wisdom alerted all forces available to assist in capturing a run-away Limousin cow which had escaped, with two others, after being spooked by a dog. The poor animal was shot as the police considered that the cow was a danger to the general public. At the time of being shot the animal was chewing the cud on the village green. No obvious common sense was used by the police in their chase to apprehend a ‘dangerous’ animal. A vigil was later held by thousands of shocked animal lovers over this sad state of affairs and a farmer, quite rightly, condemned the action and stupidity of said action.

On to matters regarding NIAG: Peter, Terry & I went to Irchester County Park in April for a day of ‘fun’ and to make our name known to the members of the public who frequent this Park – the full story is on page 21. Eight members went to the EMIAC day at Crich. Meanwhile our walks programme for the summer had a good start on May 2nd with some 12 members turning out to visit Whissendine and Wymondham Mills, the weather for once being kind. By the time this newsletter reaches you the walks programme will be almost at an end and the committee will be working hard to think of new places to visit for the 2016 season. The winter programme, enclosed with this newsletter, begins again on the 9th October and looks like being another good mix of topics.

The new book about the Boot & Shoe Heritage is selling well and once again David Saint has done a good job with a review in the Northampton Chronicle & Echo.

Coming hot from the Tour de France last year, Yorkshire hosted its inaugural race over the May Day Bank Holiday. Whilst the coverage was excellent I could not help thinking that there was a distinct lack of ‘*knowing where you were*’ and villages flashed by without the names being put up on the screen. Also there was a lack of history (helicopter shots) of important locations en route unlike the wonderful bits of information one gains from the Tour de France coverage. All power to Yorkshire with its narrow roads, steep steep hills, cross winds, coastal routes and marvellous scenery as this looks like being a fixture on the Cycle Race calendar.

Finally we take the stand to the September Heritage Day, again being held at St Seps in Northampton. If you are able why not pop along and see us.

Jane W

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WINTER TALKS 2014/15 - FINAL REPORTS

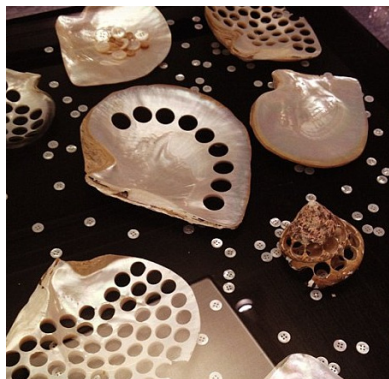
The Pearl Button Trade - 5th December 2014

In what was one of NIAG's most entertaining talks for some time, our speaker George Hook talked about his interest in the mother-of-pearl trade, in which his family has been involved for almost 200 years. Describing himself with tongue-in-cheek as the 'Managing Director of the largest company in the West Midlands making mother-of-pearl products', he conceded that he is a '*one-man-band*' and his company is now the only one making mother-of-pearl products in the UK!

Hockley, a suburb of Birmingham, also well-known as the centre of the jewellery quarter, was the centre of the button trade from the 1700s. Initially a cottage industry, the industrial revolution resulted in some degree of mechanisation in the button trade and a range of small companies sprang up making different types of buttons, including Matthew Boulton who made metal buttons in his Soho manufactory.

Although George Hook & Company is now located in Smethwick, it too began in Hockley in 1824, making buttons out of mother-of-pearl, and later other decorative products such as jewellery and cutlery handles. With hand-held saw and treadle-operated grinding wheel, the button trade carried on in Hockley into the 20th century. However, it began to decline when plastic buttons were introduced and most companies, rather than introduce new machinery, went out of business. George Hook & Company was one of the few that carried on and now, after five generations, the present George Hook is last in the family line.

Mother-of-pearl is simply the luminescent inner part of the bi-valve oyster shell, generated by calcium carbonate in the oyster's 'saliva-like fluid' which accumulates on the insides of the shell as the oyster ages. This same material builds up around any impurities introduced inside the shell of the bi-valve, which results in the creation of a pearl. (George enjoys telling WI audiences that they are wearing 'oyster spit'!) The mother-of-pearl builds up as a homogeneous non-laminar material beneath the rough outer part of the shell and can be up to an inch thick on dinner-plate sized oyster shells.



Originally, buttons were produced from small oyster shells, these were brought into the UK as ballast in ships returning from foreign parts. Then large oyster shells were discovered off the north-west coast of Australia which meant that larger mother-of-pearl products could be produced. They found that the very largest shells being up to 40 years old, tended to be damaged by holes made by sea worms, so today younger, medium-sized shells are used – these still being some 8-10 inches in diameter.

Other types of shell are sometimes used instead of oyster, including abalone, orma and trocus, the last mentioned often being used today by Far-east button companies as they are cheaper than oyster shells but if they are treated with peroxide the resulting colour is similar to that of mother-of-pearl. Examples of a range of oyster and other shells were circulated for the audience to examine, including some with the outer rough surface ground away which exposed the mother-of-pearl surface beneath and we could see the same lustre as on the inner surface.

George explained that the tools he uses to work the mother-of-pearl are relatively simple. Circular buttons are cut using a circular diamond-impregnated cutting tool driven by an electric motor. However all other shapes are cut by hand using a diamond tipped saw. Reducing the thickness, shaping, decorating and finishing operations are all undertaken using a grinding wheel with only the aid of hand and eye. No jigs are used to hold shells or cut pieces, all are hand-held.

A series of pattern cards was circulated to illustrate the range of products which can be produced, including different types of buttons, hair slides, belt buckles, scarf slides, cutlery handles and spoons – all produced out of mother-of-pearl by hand. Mother-of-pearl spoons are used in condiment sets as the mother-of-pearl is not affected by salt.

George now only produces small quantities of mother-of-pearl products which he mainly sells at craft fairs. He does it because he enjoys it, rather than trying to develop the business. Sadly when he retires the factory will close and production of mother-of-pearl in Britain will cease unless someone comes along to take the business on. In the meantime George Hook's factory is open to visitors and NIAG will look to arranging a visit there.

Peter Perkins

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Members Night – 9th January

Nearly 40 members packed into the hall for the annual members evening of presentations. This year's offering was again an excellent mix of topics and whilst some slightly overran their allotted time there was still plenty of time for a coffee and a chat amongst members before taking themselves home. There were five presentations and three of them are reported below.

Mick Dix kicked started the evening talking about steam ferries and showed some wonderful slides – not a powerpoint this time, old fashioned slides and it was most enjoyable. Jane then took members on a whistle-stop tour of the 2014 Trips and Visits beginning with our visit to Rothwell Church and the bell ringing. This is a very difficult session to organise as there were a good couple of hundred or so photographs taken during these trips; narrowing it down to about 50 was difficult but since it was not a lecture easily contained into the allotted time. Terry then took members on a tour to the boat lift on the Brussels-Charleroi canal in Belgium, this was followed by Ron Whittaker's talk about Military footwear production in

Raunds and a sample boot was passed round the members for 'inspection'. Finally a little film of the Rail Tour of 2013 was shown which brought back memories of that enjoyable trip. Thank you to Peter Acres for that film and now the reports.

Steam Ferries

We started our journey on the river Humber where we looked at the New Holland to Hull ferry that operated until the opening of the Humber Bridge in 1981. This was operated until the last few years by three steam paddle boats that were ordered by the London and North Eastern Railway before the Second World War. Once the bridge opened the ferry service ceased to operate and all three of the ferries were preserved although at least one has now been scrapped.

From the Humber we moved to Istanbul and the Bosphorus where in the 1970s and early 80s there operated a large fleet of steam ferries as well as steam tugs. The ferries were a mixture of coal fired and oil fired, all being driven by compound reciprocating engines. The steam tugs were used for bunkering the coal-fired ferries and all had funnels that could be lowered so that they could pass through the Galata Bridge without the need to float a section of it out.

The ferries shown in the slides were built during the period 1910 to 1961 and came from a variety of builders in France, Holland, Germany, Scotland and England, with the majority being built in the last two countries. The coal burning ferries mainly dated from before the Second World War but some of these had been rebuilt as oil burners in the 1960s. The last batch of steam ferries were nine built in Govan in 1961 by the Fairfield ship yard. These were different to the other ferries as they had two pairs of two-cylinder compound engines which were completely enclosed, in contrast to the older ferries which had a pair of traditional triple expansion compound engines.

Leaving the Bosphorus we headed to India and the River Ganges at Patna to look at the ferries that were still operating there in 1982. There were two ferry operations; a railway service that was operated by oil-fired paddle steamers and an independently run service that was operated by coal-fired stern wheelers. Both of these services were later replaced by a road bridge that was under construction at the time of the visit.

The railway service ran to Sonpur on the opposite side of the river and at least one of the steamers was built on the Clyde in the 1950s. The stern wheel steamers also operated a service to the opposite bank of the river but these boats were much older and had locomotive type boilers as well as being coal fired. Coaling was done by a group of youths who carried the coal to the boats in baskets balanced on their heads. Both services were well patronised, however the provision of lifeboats on the stern wheelers was rather sparse.

Mick Dix

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Boat Lift on the Brussels-Charleroi canal

This canal is an important link in the Belgian waterway system as it meets class IV of the Freycinet gauge thereby allowing vessels of up to 1350 tonnes to travel its entire length. To understand its importance it is necessary to look at Belgium's two major rivers; the Meuse and the Scheldt.

The Meuse rises at Pouilly-en-Bassigny on the Langres plateau in France with a total length of 575 miles before entering the North Sea as the Maas through Hollands Diep; it is claimed to be one of the five oldest rivers in the world. The lower (Walloon) portion, part of the sillon industriel, was the first fully industrialised area in continental Europe. Sedan is the head of navigation; though only smaller barges of up to 300 tonnes can travel south of Namur. From Givet large sections are canalised - Canal de l'Est – Nord Branche. A major tributary of the Meuse is the Sambre, which flows through the western part of the sillon industriel region. It rises near Le Nouvion-en-Thiérache in the Aisne department of France passing through the Franco-Belgian coal basin before joining the Meuse at Namur. It has been canalised along much of its length. The sillon industriel region is important for coal, iron and steel and non-ferrous metals.

Belgium's second major river, the Scheldt, rises in Gouy in the Picardy area in the Aisne department as the Escaut. 217 miles later it enters the North Sea from Holland after crossing the border near Antwerp. It is navigable as far south as Cambrai.

For centuries there had always been the desire to link the Scheldt to the Meuse – if only for the transport of coal which, since the 12th century, had to be man-handled across land and carried in small boats on the river Haine.

The concept of the Brussels-Charleroi canal dates back to 1436 with an authorisation to deepen the river Senne that runs through Brussels, though the project was deemed too expensive and abandoned. Interest was renewed in 1531 when Charles V authorised construction of a canal linking Charleroi to the Scheldt at Willebroek. However it was not until 1550 that Mary Habsburg, Governor of the Netherlands, ordered work to begin. By 1561 it had reached Brussels, though it did not continue further southwards.

During the industrial revolution coal saw a tremendous rise in economic importance with greater emphasis placed on the importance of canals. During the reign of William I of Netherlands (1772-1843) plans were finally made to extend the canal.

Today's canal is actually the fourth version. The first was built between 1827 and 1832 with a gauge of only 70 tonnes. In 1854 work started to create a "large gauge" canal of 300 tonnes on certain sections and was completed in 1857. Enlargements began again with a lock in Brussels, increasing its gauge to 800 tonnes. By 1933 all locks downstream of Clabecq had been modified to a gauge of 1350 tonnes. Plans drawn up in 1947 saw upgrades to the 1350 tonnes gauge along its length. A modernisation plan of 2011 recommends further work to enlarge three locks on the Sambre.

In September 1807 Napoleon I ordered the construction of a canal between Mons and Condé, i.e. to the Scheldt, and was opened in 1818. Meanwhile in 1810 Napoleon I approved the proposal to construct a canal between Mons and Charleroi that would be known as the Canal du Centre. However a major obstacle to its construction was a height difference of 292 ft over a relatively short distance. There followed a series of projects by French, Dutch and Belgian engineers looking at different routes and using different techniques for solving the technical problems. These were essentially commercial schemes funded by enterprises that wanted to use the link.

In the meantime a branch from the Brussels-Charleroi canal to Houdeng-Goegnies was completed in 1839.

Increased competition from the British, German and French coalfields finally led the Belgian government to intervene in 1871 and undertake to finance the canal. Its Civil Engineering Authority carried out studies to overcome the two main issues - the small quantity of available water and the large difference in levels between the two ends – 217 ft in 4¼ miles. It was decided to use lifts, rather than locks, to overcome the problems of little water and great differences in water levels. These were designed by English engineer Edwin Clarke (of Anderton fame) of Clark, Stansfield & Clark. The first lift at Houdeng-Goegnies was completed in April 1888 and inaugurated by King Leopold II on 4th June. This had a lift of 50.5 ft.

The 8¾ mile section from Mons to Thieu was completed in 1892 using six locks to gain 75 ft. Further work was delayed because it was found that the route ran through an area pitted by abandoned coal mines. Work on three other lifts, each having a lift of 55½ ft, didn't start until 1909. Work was not halted during the war as the German occupation saw the strategic importance of the link. It was opened to traffic in August 1917.



In 1957 it was decided to upgrade the entire canal to accommodate vessels up to 1350 tonnes (class IV Freycinet gauge). Rather than enlarge the existing canal (of 300 tonnes gauge), it was decided to alter the course of the canal. A new lift was built at Strépy-Thieu to replace the existing four lifts, and two locks, which are now a World Heritage site. The old route is now only used by pleasure craft and the four old lifts have been fully restored. Terry showed a picture of the new lift, which was completed in 2002 after 20 years under construction. Its two counterbalanced caissons have a lift of 240 ft.

Terry then returned to his main theme showing a map of the Brussels-Charleroi canal between Ronquières and La Louvière. The original route of this section of the canal, now known as the Ancien Canal, included 14 locks and a long tunnel. With the exception of the most northern lock into the present canal, all locks have been down-graded – the gates removed and a weir constructed at the entrance to the lock chamber. As mentioned earlier, as part of the modernisation the new alignment of the canal included a new lift, which Terry went on to describe with slides.

An inclined plane was constructed south of Ronquières to transfer vessels between two stretches of canal with a difference in levels of 68m; in fact two inclines were constructed, each operating independently of the other. The incline is 1.432km long with a gradient of 4.7%.



Shown on the left each caisson, 91m long and 12m wide, travels longitudinally on a pair of rails on each side of the incline supported by 236 wheels 700 mm in diameter arranged on 59 axles. Depending on water levels in the canal, the depth of water in the caisson varies between 3m and 3.7m; the total weight of the caisson varies between 5,000 tonnes and 5,700 tonnes. A counterweight of 5,200 tonnes also travels on four rails that are set between, and at a lower level than,

the tracks supporting the caisson; it is supported by 192 wheels arranged on 48 axles. Eight cables link the caisson with its counterweight after passing over a winding drum in the winch room located at the upper level. Six 400Vdc 170 hp motors power 5.5m diameter winding drum.

Alongside the lower dock, situated 68m below the upper dock, is a small power station containing two turbo-alternators capable of generating 1,200 kVA should the local grid network fail. Water is taken from the upper level to power the turbines; the water discharges into the lower canal to feed the seven downstream locks. When not required, the turbines can be by-passed.

Terry Waterfield

Military Footwear Production in Raunds

A Northamptonshire theme was included in the Members' Evening presentations by Ron Whittaker who spoke about the Riveted, Stitched and Screwed (RSS) method of footwear production which was used mainly in Raunds for 140 years to produce Army and other heavy duty boots. For most of the period leather was used for the soling materials and the RSS method produced a very rigid boot which was often referred to a "hob nail boot". From the 1960s to the industry's demise in the late

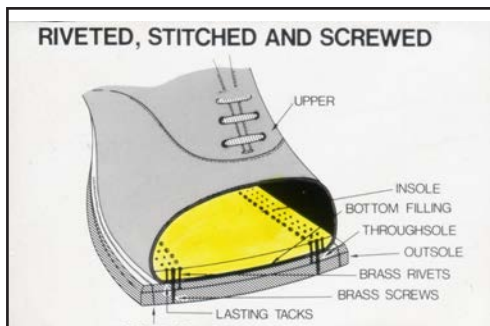
1980s, vulcanised rubber rather than leather was often used as the soling material.

The first factory in Raunds to produce the Army boot was William Nichols in 1850. It would appear that his factory in Grove Street was very profitable as he and his son built the Hall (now the Council Offices opposite from where the factory was situated), a row of shops and he also paid for the Methodist Church to be built. His monopoly was broken in 1887 when a number of his foremen set up rival factories. There were over a dozen factories in Raunds in the early part of the 20th century but by the 1970s and 80s the main manufacturers were Tebbutt and Hall, Adams Brothers and R Coggins. Coggins was the last factory to close in the early 1990s.

The RSS production method starts similarly to the cement or welted process with a lasted upper (either produced by hand as was done in the late 19th and early 20th century or by a lasting machine). A throughsole (which is not used in welted footwear) is then riveted to the insole and upper. The next process is then to stitch the sole around the edge by lockstitch on to the throughsole. The final main process is to use screws to unite the sole, throughsole and insole assembly. After edge trimming and finishing, the heavy duty boot is then complete. Ron showed a series of photographs taken in 1982 of the RSS process in operation at Adams Brothers' factory.

The Raunds bootmakers were involved in a famous strike and march to London in 1905 which received national publicity and put the town and plight of the workers on the map. In the second part of his talk, Ron detailed the story of the event.

The demand for Army boots was very high during the period of the Boer War from 1899-1902. However, once the war finished, there was great competition between the manufacturers to obtain some of the reduced orders for the footwear. This caused prices to be drastically reduced and wages cut. Bootmakers were struggling to make a living and by 1905 skilled men were having difficulty in earning £1 per week. This led to a strike on 1st March 1905 when 500 bootmakers in Raunds refused to work and over the next couple of weeks there was considerable violence in the town against strike-breakers.



The Footwear Union sent a new full-time official from Northampton to Raunds to take charge of the strike. His name was James Gribble, who had worked as a shoe finisher in Northampton before doing Army duty. Gribble was aged 37 and very bright. In assessing the situation, he realised that the main issue was not the contractors competing against each other but the way the War Office let the Army boot contracts.

Gribble decided that public awareness about the bootmakers' plight needed to be raised and planned a march from Raunds to the War Office in London. The idea gained great support in the town and 300 men volunteered. "General" Gribble selected 115 representative strikers and organised the march on military lines. The contingent included a band of 11 musicians and it was preceded by a cycle corps of three.

The march started off from Raunds on Monday 8th May and reached London by 12th May, where they were cheered by 10,000 people at a demonstration in Hyde Park. A deputation of ten men led by Gribble met a number of MPs but the Conservative Secretary for War,



Arnold Forster, refused to meet the men. The deputation was allowed to go into the Strangers' Gallery at the Commons, where a debate on the Suffragettes was taking place. Gribble used the opportunity to disrupt the debate and shouted out about the bootmakers' plight. It then took a scuffle with 12 policemen to eject Gribble and his group from the Chamber!

A key objective of the march was to raise publicity and this was achieved. The national newspapers were full of the story and on the Sunday, a large rally of 10,000 people took place in Trafalgar Square in support of the Raunds men. The gathering was addressed by Keir Hardie, the founder of the Labour Party.

Overall, the march was a success, as following the meeting with MPs it was agreed that the War Office would set up an inquiry which, after protracted negotiations, led to a statement of prices to be paid to manufacturers.

On the Monday the marchers started back on their return to Raunds. They were warmly greeted by crowds in Rushden and Higham Ferrers and welcomed by over 5,000 people in Raunds town square. All the marchers who started on the walk apparently arrived safely back.

For many of the men taking part, it was the first time they had left the local area and one of the marchers reflected on the event with the following comment. *"In London we were dined out by a well-known Sunday newspaper and enjoyed free entrance to the Circus and Music Halls. The weather was beautiful all the time and it was the best fortnight of my life"!!*

In 2005 the people of Raunds held a re-enactment of the march in the town and

an informative memorial plaque to the march has been erected next to the new Millennium gates by the Council Offices.

Ron Whittaker

Photographs from the Ron Whittaker collection.

Page 8: A cut away diagram showing the main components in the Riveted, Stitched and Screwed produced boot.

Page 9: The Marchers on their way to London in 1905. It is believed that this picture was taken on a deserted A6 by the Souldrop turn between Rushden and Bedford.

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The Great War Through the Magic Lantern - 13th March

Kevin Varty pointed out before the show that the evening was not to be just a showing of lantern slides. He aimed to illustrate with the aid of original equipment how quickly information to the public was restricted and then manipulated by the authorities at the outbreak of, and during, WWI. The evening would be split into firstly British propaganda and secondly publicity. Then there was a section of uncensored material from the USA and finally some rousing patriotic items.

The European War (as it was then referred to) broke out on the 4th August 1914 and by the 8th August a far reaching piece of legislation was passed by parliament called the "Defence of the Realm Act". This Act had many restrictions of which some were deemed treasonable. One of its rulings was to restrict the use of cameras in the fighting zone unless for the purposes of the government. Basically they did not want the public to see the reality of war and any "*News from the Front*" was heavily censored. At the outbreak our Navy had the greater number of ships, for instance 29 Dreadnought battleships to Germany's 20, however their Army numbered 5 million men compared to our 380,000. Kevin explained that in the absence of independent news of what was happening, the government provided series of slides that could be purchased or hired to be shown in church halls and community centres. Initially they were propaganda, some showing in cartoon format the fat belly Germany lording it over poor little Belgium, whilst others showed photographs of our troops, clean and smiling from their cosy dugouts in newly built DRY trenches - photographs possibly taken in the UK.

If any violence were to be shown it was emphasizing the cruelty to horses and animals, all in order to raise public anger. As the war progressed and became more of a reality this propaganda turned more to publicity showing how our lads were being looked after by immaculately uniformed medical staff.

It also showed how various charitable organisations were providing mobile field kitchens as well as rest and recuperation centres. The centres illustrated were run by the YMCA and must have been positioned not far behind the lines as some had artillery damage.

His next set of slides was of American origin and didn't seem to have been censored.

These would not have been seen in the UK. They showed a bare mudscape with the odd piece of metal sticking up on the horizon. More animated ones showed supplies being moved by mule-drawn sledges across deep mud, whilst men and mules hauled loaded narrow-gauge wagons. One amusing slide showed a red cross mule which had had its rump hair shaved in the shape of a cross to prevent it being stolen by an enterprising light fingered trooper.

The final series of the evening returned to British slides and consisted of portraits of royalty and British and foreign war leaders. The last slide was of the words to the song, *”Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag”*, so with a final rendering from the audience the evening concluded, but for one final observation from Kevin, *“that the first casualty of war is the truth”*.

Ron Hanson



UPDATES

Ex-Barratts factory sign.

The wall of the former Barratts shoe factory in Northampton has been restored to its former glory five years after it was controversially whitewashed. The listed building in Kingsthorpe Road, now known as Barratt House, has had, since the 1960s, a painted sign on its northern wall directing the public to ‘walk around’ the ‘factory shoe shop’.

In 2010, it was white-washed then repainted with the reference to the shoe shop omitted in response to complaints from businesses in Barratt House, who were irritated by the number of people asking to see the shoe shop. The building houses offices and is now owned by McManus Taverns, which also owns the nearby Barratts Club, and they have now been instructed by Northampton Borough Council to repaint the wall, albeit not in exactly the same way as it looked previously. The new signage sees the word ‘Barratts’ repainted in a font similar to the original and the replacement ‘footshape boot works’ words repainted to match.

The council said that, after discussions, the developer submitted applications to the local authority in 2011 for Listed Building and Advertisement consents to restore the sign in keeping with the original but with revised wording. These applications were the subject of public consultation and approved. The application lapsed before the developer had carried out the work and identical applications were resubmitted in November 2014 and approved in December 2014.

A spokesman for NBC said: *“As part of our duty to protect the town’s heritage we have been working with the developer to see that the sign is restored. It will be good to see the sign finally restored and our planning enforcement officers are due to visit soon.”*

Northampton Chronicle & Echo – 23rd April 2015.

Brighton's £5million facelift completed

A report in the *Railway Magazine of December 2013* tells us that the facelift for Brighton has been completed. NIAG visited Brighton on the 2012 Rail Tour and work was still in progress then.

The removal of the old WH Smith building and the departure boards to the north of the concourse has opened it up to give an almost uninterrupted view of the whole of the train shed and its arched roof. The cab road has been resurfaced and gates have been added to the entrance to keep the look and feel of a traditional cab road.



MISCELLANY ITEMS OF INTEREST

Northampton Corporation Daimler Bus – Part 2

As mentioned previously the bus did not come with its own set of tyres. With my contacts in the motor trade I was able to obtain six part-worn tyres, in fact they were nearly new. These were then placed on the correct wheels and then fitted onto 250. Before the first MOT the bus was taken to what was the United Counties Bus garage in Wellingborough to check things over. It was discovered that the braking efficiency was not quite good enough and that there was play in one of the front kingpins. With the help of the late Dereck Warboys these problems were sorted out and the bus passed its MOT. I should point out that none of us were mechanics. Dereck was a fitter at United Counties.

On a test run it was discovered that two of the three belts to the generator had snapped. The hatch in the lower saloon was lifted and the belts removed. Next question was how to obtain the correct belts. It was remembered that Smith & Grace in Thrapston sold various types of V belts. Along with a sample of what was required I arrived at S&G. The lady behind the counter said "oh that's size so and so" and duly reached up for the correct size. These were fitted in due course.

Another problem occurred sometime later when the down pipe from the exhaust manifold started to blow. To get this off we had to remove the driver's seat to get access to a panel in the cab which in turn allowed us to remove the down pipe from the engine. Not having the necessary equipment or facility to remove the engine. Once the pipe was removed one Sunday morning, I seem to remember the next question was where to get a replacement. My delivery round working for W. Grose included Peterborough. In the town was a Foden dealer. Foden used Gardiner engines so it was hoped they might have something similar. In fact it was at Ford & Slater out at Fengate that had something near the shape that was wanted. With the help of a Rushden Society member the new pipe was cut and braised to the correct shape and duly fitted back on the bus.

The front radiator grill and wings were of fibre class construction as was the off-

side lower rear quarter panel. On at least two occasions we managed to split the rear quarter panel going over ground at rallies that was uneven. We managed to obtain from Northampton Transport a new one and the broken one was repaired by my friends at Alec Head Coaches. They also lent me the special tool to remove the beading around the panel.

I had managed in the course of my job to discover that the upper deck windows from Northampton Transport GVV 205 had been removed by a firm in Finedon. They were converting the vehicle to display double glazing for T&K Windows. These were loaded into my W. Grose Bedford CF van and taken to our base.

Parked at a school in Kettering was ex-Northampton GVV209 used as a play bus. This was no longer required but was not driveable. With the help of Keystone Coaches using their Foden recovery truck it was towed to Wymington one Saturday morning. Several parts including the anti-suicide rails and the engine were removed before the bus went for scrap. This gave us a spare engine which was never used and was eventually sold on. The suicide rails made of wood came in handy as on at least one occasion one on the bus was broken.

At a rally at Old Warden airfield we managed to get the bus stuck on soft ground. With several helpers it proved impossible to move 250. Fortunately a Bedford QL was on site and with the use of a tow rope was able to pull the bus out of its predicament.



© Peter Acres

The bus being parked in the open did not help the paintwork. It seemed to come out in yellow patches showing through the red. This had not been noticed on the Corporation buses so could only assume it was because they were parked under cover at night. The correct paint was obtained from the suppliers and a start made in removing the paintwork back down to bare metal. This took several weeks to achieve having to watch the weather. First a brown primer then a

pink undercoat and finally the red topcoat. It looked good when eventually finished but it was not long before the yellow started to reappear.

As we did not carry fare paying passengers the bus could be driven on a car licence. None of us, I think found it that difficult to drive. One had to bear in mind the length and height and it did not have power steering. Also one had to bear in mind bridges under 14ft 7ins and the occasional tree branches.

Northampton Council told us to remove the words Northampton Transport from the sides of the bus. Their argument was that if we drove through town and did not stop when required at bus stops, they would get complaints from passengers not realising

our bus was not on service. Not a problem that owners of preserved London buses seem to have. We did think of going back to the original crest, but never got round to it. We never did have any accidents while on the road; any damage to the bus was on undulating fields at the various rallies we attended.

All in all it was an interesting experience, having to find ways around various jobs without the use of workshop facilities. All our work being carried out mainly in the open.

Peter Acres.

----oooOooo----

The Screaming Valenta

On Saturday 15th November 2014 a specially chartered East Midland Trains shortened High Speed Train set left Derby for the Great Central Railway (North) at Ruddington. The occasion for this visit was to witness the first running of prototype HST power car 41001 pulling an HST set since 1973.

June 1972 saw 41001 arrive at Derby from Crewe Works to start a test programme. After driver training work started on high speed testing from Leeds Neville Hill in May 1973. In June of that year 41001 breaks the world diesel record between York and Darlington reaching 143.2 mph. After further testing in 1975 it pulled its first passenger train from Bristol to Paddington. In 1977 having been renumbered 43000 it was withdrawn from the passenger fleet and transferred into the test train fleet and renumbered again as ADB975812. During 1982 it was withdrawn from service and stored at Derby. In 1985 it was renumbered back to 41001 and became part of the National Collection at the Railway Museum at York.

A preservation group started in 2007, had the idea to bring the power car back into running order. The 125 Group with the permission of the Railway Museum were given the go ahead to do this. However there would be no money available from the NRM. So in March 41001 was moved from York to Neville Hill. The work required to get the power car working again was given the name 'Project Miller'. This chap was one of the original designers of the HST concept. A replacement Paxman Valenta engine was obtained and much work done on the electrics and interior of the power car. The new engine was started up for the first time on 1st July 2013. The power car has been taken to several locations including Didcot Railway Centre and Derby Etches Park Depot before arriving at its new home on the GCR(N) at Ruddington. Much of this work was carried out with the assistance of EMT's staff at Neville Hill. On the 31st May 2014 the power car ran under its own power, the first time in 30 years, on a loaded test run on the GCR(N).

The chartered train left Derby at 10:25 as train reporting number 1Z25 carrying the head board '*Screaming Valenta*'. The HST set had been supplied free of charge by EMT and the train crew gave their time for free. On arrival at Loughborough South Junction the train reversed onto the Loughborough High Level and onto the GCR. At 50 Steps the train reversed again to gain access to Ruddington Fields Station. Arriving there at 12:02. At Ruddington power car 43045 was taken off the

train and replaced by 41001. The train then departed for a run down the GCR to Loughborough High Level. At 50 Steps the train again reversed, now with 41001 in the lead. Arriving back at Ruddington after a successful run the power cars were swapped back. There were several short speeches from Sir Kenneth Grange (one of the original designers), the Managing Directors of EMT and SWT and the Boss of The National Railway Museum.

The consist [train] now using reporting number 1Z43 left Ruddington at 15:55 and headed back down the GCR to Loughborough, joining the Midland Main Line and running down to Leicester Station. At Leicester the train reversed once again for the run back to Derby via East Midlands Parkway, Trent Junction and Long Eaton arriving at Derby at 17:47.

It would be nice to think that in several years time when Network Rail have built the bridge over the Midland Main Line at Loughborough and the required embankments are in place, that the two halves of the GCR will be joined up. Thus allowing the possibility of a full HST set to run the length of the line hauled by 41001.

Peter Acres

----oooOooo----

Plans for a wind farm are dropped

Plans to build a wind farm at Nun Wood near Bozeat have been shelved by the company behind them, RWE Innogy. The firm's regional development manager, Robin Basten said: "*It is with great disappointment we have decided to cease our interest in the Nun Wood Wind Farm development.*"

Northants Telegraph – 23rd October 2014

Airfield site for solar farm

Plans have been submitted to build a solar farm on a former airfield. Northfield UK Solar is proposing to build the farm on part of the old RAF Desborough airfield. According to the company's website, the farm will be up to 49 megawatts in size, which would provide enough renewable energy to meet the annual electricity needs of up to 14,840 homes and could save up to 21,000 tonnes of CO² per year.

The company states that: "*The scheme would result in approximately one third of the site area within the planning application boundary being covered with solar panels. The area in between would be turned to pasture and used for sheep grazing, which is an established and successful approach on other UK solar farms. The solar scheme is designed to allow existing footpaths to be used without diversion or closure, both during construction and operation. We have already decided to avoid the entire northern area of the former airfield to minimise views from Stoke Albany and Wilbarston and to focus our panels on the least productive farmland.*"

On the subject of connecting the farm to the National Grid, the firm states: "*We are still considering a number of options for our electrical connection and will therefore provide further details about this aspect of our proposal as and when they become available.*"

Northants Telegraph – 5th February 2015

Remembering Pork Pie days!

Irchester has been remembering the closure of the Parsons pork pie factory 50 years ago. Jon-Paul Carr, of Irchester Historical Society, has written about the factory's history. He said: *"During the Napoleonic wars a village baker called Mr Darnell started making pork pies. He had a daughter, Frances, who married Thomas Parsons in Irchester Church in 1836. Thomas went on to develop the business as a bakers, butchers, provision merchants, grocers, beer retailer, farmers, coal and salt merchants in the High Street. In the early 1850s, when the Midland Railway came through the parish, the firm expanded by supplying pork pies to the railway navvies. In due course they became known for not only their pork pies, but sausages and meat pastries. Thomas's son, Edward, took over the running of the business when his father died in 1888. Edward renamed the company Edward Parsons & Son Ltd in 1911. In 1922 Edward Parsons died and his son Frank took over. In the 1920s they developed a depot in London to supply large stores such as Fortnum & Mason and Harrods. After the Second World War, Frank's two sons, Ted and Dick, became involved with the business. In 1952, Parsons built Parsons Hall as a staff canteen and also for use as a village hall. They also developed the bowling club. In 1964 the business was sold to Bowyers of Bristol and it closed a year later in January 1965."*

Northants Telegraph – 5th February 2015

Wolverton Works buildings threatened with demolition

Wolverton Works – the world's longest operating railway factory, having been open continuously since 1838 – is set to be knocked down. Property development company St Modwen wants to build a supermarket on part of the 37-acre site and is offering to give Wolverton's operator, Knorr-Bremse, a new but much smaller set of buildings in which to carry on its train refurbishment business.

It is understood that St Modwen has not yet offered a detailed application to Milton Keynes planning authorities, but it has nevertheless put pressure on the council by releasing for public consultation its plan to flatten the buildings, some of which date back to London & Birmingham Railway days. More than 50% of the site is not used for rail-related activity. The trainsheds housing the former sawmill and boilerhouse have been fenced off along the works reception line as they have serious structural issues and several sections of roof recently collapsed.

Knorr-Bremse took over operation of the works on August 27th last year after previous occupant Railcare went into administration four weeks earlier. There is a large order book, with current work including the Class 456 renovation project for South West Trains and Abelio Mk 3 carriages being given an overhaul, as are three Mk 1 buffet cars owned by Locomotive Services. Class 153 overhaul continue and new contracts for similar work on Class 150 and Class 319 EMUs are about to start. There is also a lot of wheelset overhaul work being carried out, ranging from 'Pendolinos' to London Underground stock.

St Modwen, which bought the works from Alstom, wants to build a discount food store and large car park, despite the fact that a Tesco superstore was built on another

chunk of former works property 25 years ago. The developer says the work would be phased to suit the needs of Knorr-Bremse over the next three to five years (its lease last until 2017) and that modern fit-for-purpose buildings will be provided to guarantee that the plant continues to provide employment.

The oldest buildings date back to the 1830s and are listed, but their poor condition has led to a growing concern among Wolverton's population that even those listed structures could disappear. Wolverton is also the home of the Royal Train, which is housed in two high-security trainsheds next to the main works area. The train is understood to be subject of a separate lease that grants an inalienable right of rail access to the West Coast Line just south of Wolverton station.

The Railway Magazine – October 2014

Nene Valley offered old Wansford station for £50k, but....

The Nene Valley Railway launched a £150,000 SOS appeal to cover the cost of achieving its long-held dream of buying and restoring the original Wansford station building. It has now been offered the yellow stone building at a bargain price of £50,000. However, far more money



needs to be raised to carry out basic protective repairs to save it from falling into ruin, and this is now the subject of the latest appeal.

The Nene Valley Railway Heritage Centre Group was set up in 2003 to rescue the old Wansford station building and develop it as a restored Victorian railway station with displays and exhibits telling the story of the Northampton to Peterborough line. However, it was initially thought that it would have to raise £700,000 to buy the attractive and

ornate Grade II listed building, which has stood empty for many years, along with the station yard. However, the owner, the adjacent transport and warehousing firm JA Hutchinson (Wansford) Ltd, has now agreed to sell the station building, but not the yard, to the railway at a knockdown price. It is in urgent need of restoration to prevent it from becoming a ruin.

Standing beside platform 3, in October 2011 the building, designed by JW Livock, appeared on the list of the 10 most threatened Victorian and Edwardian buildings published by the Victorian Society. Huntingdon District Council's Buildings at Risk Register lists the station building as category 1, the highest category.

The station opened along with the Northampton & Peterborough Railway in 1845, and for a time was the railhead for Grantham, as it lay on the Great North Road. Wansford closed for regular passenger services on 1st July 1957, although they continued to run over the line to Northampton until 1964 and Rugby until 1966. Not

being able to get access to the station building, the NVR built a new headquarters and on the opposite side of the line.

In 2004, the heritage line received a grant from the HLF to appoint a project planning officer to develop plans for a heritage centre in the old station. Five years later, a bid for major Lottery cash was turned down because the railway could not get written confirmation from the owner that it would be willing to sell the building at an agreed price. Now the owner has agreed to dispose of the structure, the only original station building surviving on the NVR, for £50,000, which roughly corresponds to what the railway raised from its first appeal.

Heritage Railway – issue date not noted (has to be sometime during 2014!) Ed

Grant of £75,000 will bring old fire station back into use

A 128-year-old landmark is set to get a £75,000 grant bringing it back into community use.

The Old Fire Station in Brackley will be renovated with the help of a South Northamptonshire Council approved grant. Funding came from the New Homes Bonus which supports communities affected by growth and development. Brackley Town Council revealed that it could become a public meeting space and cafe to bridge the space between two retail areas creating community focus.

The Town Mayor said: *“The town council is pleased that the grant application was successful as it moves the project forward and, by using the New Homes Bonus Grant Scheme, it means that the whole community can benefit from the funds available as a result of the expansion of the town”*. Another councillor said: *“Brackley has taken a large number of new housing with more planned. While there is always pain associated with new development, this begins to show some community pay back.”*

Brackley and Towcester – Buckingham Advertiser – 20th February 2015

Wolverton set for 2017 demolition?

A Wolverton works redevelopment plan has been released for consultation by St Modwen, the property company which owns the 37-acre railway works site. Half of the land, which has been in continuous railway workshop use since 1838 (making it the world’s longest continuously operating railway works), will be used for non-rail development.

The vast majority of workshops are over 100 years old, with only the Royal Train shed and the adjacent electrical test bay built within the last 25 years. Over half the site is disused with the former boiler shop, saw mill and joiners’ shops sealed off after parts of the roof collapsed.

The works entered administration following Railcare’s collapse on 30th July 2013 and exited Administration on 27th August 2013 when Knorr-Bremse purchased the business, but not the land – this was leased from St Modwen until 2017. St Modwen says that *“this significant private investment will deliver a package of community benefits in the heart of Wolverton town centre, including a new discount foodstore, new homes and modern new premises for its growing railway business tenant”*. A

giant Tesco store was built 23 years ago on part of the former works so the need for neighbouring discount foodstores may be questioned.

The site overheads are huge and only an estimated 40% of the train shed capacity is currently used for accident damage repairs, Mk 3 coach and Class 153, 319 and 456 multiple-unit refurbishment. A Class 150 diesel multiple-unit contract is about to commence.

The Royal Train has been based at Wolverton works for over 150 years and at privatisation, the current 'Royal Shed' was subject to a separate lease, running for 125 years granting absolute rail access rights through Wolverton Works' land.

St Modwen hopes that following consultation, it will submit a planning application within three months and obtain consent by June 2015 with completion by 2020.

Modern Railways – October 2014

Snibston to close in latest round of cutbacks

Snibston Discovery Museum in Coalville is to close after Leicestershire CC decided that it can no longer afford to keep the industrial preservation centre open. It is said that the museum, which opened in 1992, was costing in the region of £740,000 a year to run and that it could no longer be justified.

The museum is built on the site of the former Snibston Colliery, which itself dates back to 1831 having been sunk by George Stephenson. The surviving historic headgear structures (that in 1999 were awarded Scheduled Ancient Monument status) form the backdrop to a re-created colliery railway, which at one time connected with the Leicester & Swannington Railway. Diesel-hauled passenger rides have been a feature of the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile line for several years, but photographic charter business has dried up after local residents complained about the smoke. [*Oh dear!*] The main exhibition hall at Snibston is home to several items of railway heritage, including ex-GWR 0-4-OST No.921, built by Brush in Loughborough in 1906, and Andrew Barclay 0-4 OF W/No.1815. Meanwhile in



the former colliery engine shed reside Hunslet 'Austerity' 0-6-OST *Cadley Hall* No.1 – one of the last steam locos in industrial service in the UK – and former Leicester Gas Works RSH 0-4 OST Mars II, along with two Ruston diesel locos. Other railway exhibits include Coalville Crossing signalbox and the Leicester & Swannington Railway lifting bridge that once spanned the River Soar Navigation

near West Bridge in Leicester.

The vote to close the museum was passed on January 14th and it is too early to say what will happen to the exhibits and site. No date has actually been set for the closure, although it could be towards the end of the year. Part of the site – including the land where the exhibition hall stands and a section of the railway pit bank – is likely to be sold for housing. The colliery headgear and some of the old surface buildings will be retained thanks to their protected status. The rest of the exhibits could then be sent to other museums.

Steam Railway – February 2015

New boilermiths

Almost 30 years after BR's closure of Swindon Works in 1986, a small corner of the former GWR complex is once again to play its part in training the next generation of boiler engineers. Hatch Heritage & Steam Engineers is to work with the university's new technical college.

Steam Railway – February 2015

Coach renovated

After 30 years, Severn Valley Railway Charitable Trust has finished a complete restoration of 1934 LNER coach No.43600. It features many new period fittings.

Steam Railway – February 2015

White Mills Lock, River Nene – Flat caps to hard hats

In the 1920s 12 men and one boy probably took months to clear out the White Mills Lock on the River Nene in Earls Barton. In those days flat caps were worn instead of hard hats, cranes were precariously perched on large wooden beams and smoking on the job clearly wasn't a hazard either!

Today it could not be more different. Over the past three weeks a much smaller team from Drake Towage of Wisbech has been giving White Mills Lock a complete overhaul. Not only has the lock been completely drained down and emptied, but the guillotine gate has been repainted and had its bottom seal adjusted, while the V gates have had new pintols and breast timbers installed as well as a steel cill to replace the old timber one. The work on the lock comes just before work gets underway on constructing White Mills marina, the new 141-berth development on the River Nene adjacent to Lock 9.

Canal Boating Times – May 2015

Solar farm plans for a former wartime base

A former Second World War airfield could be turned into a large solar farm, according to plans submitted to Kettering Council by an energy firm. RAF Desborough, which is off the B669 between Stoke Albany and Desborough, was used by the RAF between 1943 and 1953. The 112 hectare site has had a number of uses since the airfield was scrapped and is currently used as agricultural land. An application has been submitted by RAF Desborough Ltd to install hundreds of solar panels at the site, which will generate 49.9 megawatts of electricity every year, which is enough

to meet the needs of about 30,000 homes. Kettering Council aims to make a decision on the application by 30th July.

Northants Telegraph – 30th April 2015



OF THIS AND THAT

Membership renewal notices

Enclosed are the membership renewal forms. Please check and return as soon as is possible in order that you may continue to receive the Newsletter and the Winter and Summer programmes. As always non-renewal will mean that no Newsletters will be sent to you in January and thereafter. AGM notices will be sent out with the October Newsletter.

Wanted: Articles or photographs for the web-site. Terry has made a request for articles, photographs and information for the website. Contributions are welcome and will be acknowledged in the usual way. He is currently in the process of getting past newsletters on line and this 'exercise' is well on the way to being completed. If you are able to contribute please do so and Terry thanks you in advance.

Cornwall and its mines

We welcome our newest member from Cornwall, who went to school at Wellingborough Grammar and who played, as a boy, in Wembley Pit, Irchester. Leaving the county he went on to live and work in Scunthorpe at the RTB's iron ore mines before eventually moving to Cornwall to work in the Levant, Geevor, Wheal Jane and Mount Wellington Tin Mines as a mine surveyor. He now joint owns the Rosevale Tin Mine at Zennor and is working on the restoration of this underground heritage project after some forty odd years. Should any NIAG members be visiting the area Mr Shipp will be delighted to show you around the mine. There is a website: www.rosevalemine.co.uk for more information.

Irchester County Park.

We were invited to the Park by the County Council to promote the fact that this was once an Ironstone Quarry. Terry, Peter and I represented NIAG and took the stand appropriately 'dressed' with as much information that we hold on the Park and its former association with the ironstone industry. The day began well with warm sunshine and a breeze. Rather rickety tents were put up by the County Council staff and we settled in, with fingers crossed, for a day explaining the history and former function of the park. Peter set off for a brief foray into the former quarry area of calcine banks and woods to ensure that walks, if requested, took any punters into the appropriate areas which still showed signs of having been quarried. I collected various pieces of ironstone which were on the ground to show any children what this ore looked like and which would complement the calcined pieces which I already

had in small display boxes. Terry went in search of large concrete blocks to weigh down the tent poles.

The wind was picking up even though the sun was shining and quite warm and we watched the display stand with eagle eyes diving across to anchor any leaflets which showed signs of being blown off the tables.

The morning passed and we had one visitor with his daughter – “*Didn't know that you could get iron from that piece of stone*” was the rather awed response to our information about the quarry. ‘*An iron sword eventually from stone – wow.....*’ They stayed with us for a short while while other families glanced our way and carried on either to the café or into the huge playground which was alongside our tents. We shifted the tables, and exhibits, away from the sides of the flimsy tent to try to avoid things being swept off the tables by the side panels. It became something of a nightmare – the boards went over at least three times before we gave up and stood them on the ground. Other exhibits got swept off the tables and were put away. People came and went and we managed to sell a few of the Ironstone books and the new publication. Finally, to our horror, the tent's back panel completely broke, fell in and onto the stand, for the fourth time and we abandoned ship. Park staff came to our aid and helped to dismantle the exhibition, in fact stood there holding the tent up while we shifted everything. The people in the tent next door packed up and went home – meanwhile we continued to transfer our exhibits across the grass into another tent and finally gave up, sorting ourselves out, packing up the car and leaving. Even the Vikings weren't happy and had spent the best part of the day chasing things across the wide open spaces. Peter never did any walks – the advertising for the event was abysmal and apart from having a lovely long chat with Diana Sutherland who was impressed with the stand and information, we sat and chatted between ourselves.

If there is to be a next time, then we will be requesting a better lead time to organise ourselves and will ensure that we will do our own advertising and not leave it to others.

The next day saw Terry and I reprinting many of the photographs which had been damaged every time the display board fell down – thankfully the board itself was robust and not damaged, but it has led to the question that we will have to think of another form of ‘stand’ should we entertain doing any ‘outdoor’ exhibition work. Certainly we will insist on a better type of tent and not one of those which is totally useless in the wind. Oh! And I ached all day and took painkillers until they came out of my ears!

JW

2015/16 Winter Programme – enclosed with the newsletter

9th October Spitfires over Castle Bromwich – Mike Gibson

13th November NIAG's AGM followed by talk on the Restoration of Wooden Canal Boats by Peter Boyce

4th December The London Underground with Jason Cross

Dates for the Diary:

12th Sept. Heritage Fair - St Sepulchre Church rooms - 10.30 to 4.00 pm. We take the stand to ensure that NIAG's name is kept to the forefront of all the Heritage Groups attending. Assistance on the day appreciated - gives Terry and me a short break.

10th October EMIAC - New Sites at Old Sites - Old railways, Coal Mining & Windmills. LIHS hosts the day. Booking form is enclosed.

Exhibitions:

Until 31st August:

A Knights Trail: Six large scale wooden sculptures of medieval knights are on display. A map to track down these sculptures is available from www.lovenorthampton.co.uk. Northampton Town Centre.

18th July to 6th September:

Beastly machines: a collection of kinetic sculptures by Derbyshire based sculptor Johnny White featuring a menagerie of moving animals. Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, Northampton.

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Assistance required:

IWM Duxford launched a historical project last year and asked if any of our members are able to assist with information about this project as follows.

The American Air Museum website www.americanairmuseum.com seeks to record the stories of American airmen and women based in Britain during the Second World War and the British people they met. The website showcases a collection of thousands of photographs which depict people, planes, places and missions. The website can be added to and edited by anyone who registers, following a very simple sign-up process on the website itself, and is completely free to use.

It is expected that the content of the site could be of interest to NIAG members, as highlights include wartime aerial photography from English Heritage's archive and many intriguing photographs of US troops socialising with UK civilians. It is understood that some people browsing the site have already recognised relatives and friends.

As Northamptonshire contains many airfields such as Spanhoe (Wakerley), Polebrook and Harrington, they are seeking the help of NIAG members towards capturing and recording the local heritage of your area.

The kinds of things which others have done to date include:

- Identifying the people and places shown in the photographs already on the

site and adding captions online.

- Scanning a personal photo album or local photograph collection and sharing the pictures on the website
- Creating a record for a British civilian (a relative or yourself) who has memories of the Americans in Britain and adding their memories and biography to the website
- Carrying out oral history interviews.

Contact details: James Rossington, Heritage Marketing Consultant for The Eighth in the East and IWM Duxford, IWM Duxford, Cambridge, CB22 4QR - email: JRossington@iwm.org.uk. Suggest you mention that you are a member of NIAG.

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And Finally

Sham battles brought town to life

Sham battles were all the rage in the 1860s. They pleased the public, satisfied the vanity of noble commanders, gave volunteers a pleasant holiday but were closer to playing soldiers than training men to fight effectively.

The Duke of Buckingham and Chandos took pride of place as Lieutenant Colonel to the Royal Bucks Yeomanry Cavalry during the Stowe Sham battle of June, 1864. It was his first chance to shine for he'd inherited Stowe from his father, the 2nd Duke, less than two years before. His cavalry were part of a force defending Wolfe's Obelisk ground.

It promised to be a great day, maybe the highlight of 1864: a Great Volunteer Review in Stowe Park, a mansion virtually in lock-down since 1848. London & NW Railway ran a cheap day excursion from Euston for 4 shillings "return" in a smart "covered carriage". The train departed from London at 8.15 am, arriving at Buckingham "about" 10.30 am and the return to town was arranged for 10 pm. Demand was buoyant, so train after relief train crawled to Buckingham and beyond for the Duke of Buckingham had arranged for a siding where trains could park to be built at Bacon's Crossing – the nearest point that the railway came to Stowe Park. He had asked for a double track to be installed so that trains might pass each other but that hadn't been done. Such faulty planning ensured a train jam built up between Buckingham and this Crossing. Excursion trains arrived, snuggled up close but no regular train service could pass all day, either in the up direction to Brackley and Banbury or down to Buckingham, Blethley and beyond.

The infantry tested a new tactic: in the face of cavalry attack instead of forming into squares, they formed four lines, the front two dropping to their knees so that those behind might fire over them. Stowe's 1,300 acres of park provided a great fighting arena, and the troops' "circuit" of almost 3 miles was engineered so the

spectators could see everything. Possibly, 20,000 spectators viewed from in and around a special grandstand erected between the rifle butts and Wolfe's Obelisk, looking along a shallow valley where the action and skirmishes were to take place.

*'Back to the Past' with Ed Grimsdale –
Buckingham Advertiser – 20th February 2015*

One more thing....

I wrote about a couple of animal stories catching my eye recently, but did you manage to catch the footage of a pussycat, having curled up in a wing of a small plane, emerging to hang on to the wing itself once the plane was aloft, until the trainee pilot spotted it, did a double take, and without any fuss returned to the airfield for a perfect landing before the cat, assisted, 'got off'. Wonderful stuff.



Next Issue:

Summer reports

Updates and stories from the newspapers

AGM papers - yes it's that time again

Unless stated all photographs are credited to Jane and Terry Waterfield

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Newsletter:

Next Issue: **October 2015**

Deadline for all articles and information **20th September 2015.** Anything received after this date will be held over to the next edition.

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 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.