



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE'S INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

NEWSLETTER



BALH Newsletter of the Year Award 2017

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Northamptonshire Industrial Archaeology Group

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From the Editor

It seems that I have been caught 'on the hop' as it is with something of a shock that this edition needed to be finished and sent to the printers. Quite where January and February have gone remains a 'mystery'. However, into a new year and into freedom from the EU's sometimes petty restrictions and rules.

Storm '*Ciara*' is upon us as I pen this introduction and I sincerely hope that none of you suffered any damage to garden and property.

Arrangements for the October EMIAC are well under way and this looks as if it will be an excellent conference. In the meantime Matlock Bath is the next port of call for the EMIAC conferences and again this looks as if it will be a good day – all we can hope for is a good, dry and warmish day – and that can be said for the October day as well.

The summer programme of walks and visits is enclosed with the newsletter and it is asked that where costs are involved, payment of intent to attend will be required *up front*. NIAG can no longer be expected to make a financial loss, as has happened for a couple of years. See note on page 23 and on the summer programme itself.

Please also note that the information for submitting photographs to illustrate an article you may send in has been updated. See the back cover for details.

The winter talks have been excellent and by the time you get this the committee will have begun the task of sorting out the 2020/21 session. Time and Tide waits for no man!

Hope to see you during the summer months, if not have a good summer.

JW - Editor

EMIAC 97 : Melting and Smelting at British Steel, Scunthorpe – 5th October

This was held at the British Steel (BS) conference centre. Normal introduction with fire precaution instructions. Then followed a gas alarm procedure. Should the gas alarm sound we stay put as we were in a designated containment building.

Open cast iron ore extraction started in the 1830s. Initially the ore was exported. With the coming of the railways in 1860 it was realised that it was cost effective to import coal and by 1864 there was a foundry. The current site is approximately eight square miles with a 15-mile perimeter. Four blast furnaces. Two operational, another on potential standby. The fourth has had its day. Around 120 miles of railway track. Three rolling mills for plate, rails and wire. Currently about 4000 people are employed.

Steven Stubbins opened the conference with a potted history by showing an 1824 map of the local Frodingham area of the Lincolnshire Edge. The blast furnaces were still being loaded or *charged* by hand in to the 1950s. Many by-

products were discovered. Slag was high in phosphorous which lead to fertilizer; oils and tars were distilled. Very interesting talk, on manufacturing development and the social impact on the area, supported with many photographs, maps and diagrams.

Second speaker was **Bryan Longbone**. *The Structure, Development & ownership of the Companies and the origins of different raw materials & their transport to Scunthorpe*. 45 minutes of tedium! Basically, discounted freight rates to remain competitive with product price variations. Iron Masters Association (collective) formed in 1891.

John Hill gave an informed talk on the *Changes in Steel Making*. He had been an industrial chemist and started work here in 1959. For steel, the carbon content can vary from 0.8% to a maximum of 85%. Loads of options by the introduction of other elements for specialist applications. Lime and oxygen used in vast quantities. BOC tanks on site were pressurised to over 40 bar. An *Oberhausen* rotary furnace introduced in 1961 allowed steel to be produced in 80 to 120 ton charges. The variation was due to the wear of the furnace lining during its working life. Only three ever existed (UK, Germany and South Africa). Spectrograph analysis in the mid-1960s enabled the chemical composition to be resolved in minutes saving valuable time. Workers had to wear flannel fire-resistant clothing in an already very hot environment. A gallon of fluid, normally tea with the bonus of salt tablets, would be drunk by each worker per shift. Most washed away the obnoxious taste in the pub.

Following lunch, the Appleby Frodingham Railway Preservation Society conducted a 2½-hour rail tour. This society originally started as part of the BS social club to show family and friends around the site. Two un-powered DMUs, built in Derby in 1958, were pulled by an 0-6-0 ST steam loco *Cranford* made by



Avonside of Bristol in 1954.

(photo left) The commentary was poor. We spotted some very old stone buildings with stone lintels hidden under a very modern roof. Certainly farm buildings, possibly stables. Wind socks were all around the site; in case of gas escapes the wind direction is known. A line of scrap

locos including 0-6-0 Janus type and the much larger double bogie German built D-18s. Sort of fork-lifts on steroids to move hot rolled square bar sections to the cooling areas. Some with electro-magnets. Lots of scrap metal is recycled and their sorting yard was vast. Much of the site was waste land. Black slag, clinker, ash and coal. Not much flora or fauna. A coke plant produced gas.

Having completed an outer circuit, we stopped at the society's loco yard, with a four-road engine shed/workshop, for a tea break. To conclude, the train was pulled backwards and then we did another half circuit on a slightly different route. Passing the *torpedo* repair shop. These immense cylindrical transporters are mounted on 12-wheeled



bogies and carry around 100 tons of molten metal. A locomotive is attached to each end. Regularly their linings need replacing and have to be *fired* for about four days. This all takes place in the open. Must be spectacular at night.

An interesting day.

N.B. *British Steel Corp 1967–1999. Corus/Tata 1999–2016. British Steel 2016 (sold by Tata to Greybull Capital for £1.00 and re named British Steel Ltd). They are the only UK producer of rail for the railways.*

Mike Ringwood

Photo above shows Appleby Station inside the works where the Appleby-Frodingham Railway Trust have their base. The Station building was where the delegates had their tea. Photos for the article taken by Ron Whittaker, 2019.

WINTER TALKS OF 2019-20

History of Brickmaking in Bedfordshire – 7th October 2019

The Romans were the first to introduce brickmaking to Britain, but the process was forgotten after they left. It was re-introduced in Medieval times when Flemish builders brought the process into Essex and East Anglia. One of most notable examples of these locally was Someries Castle at Hyde in south-east Bedfordshire. Built between 1430 and 1448, the brickwork on what remains of the gatehouse reveals intricate corbelling using skilfully moulded, kiln-fired bricks.

Rye House near Hoddesdon (1443) is another early example containing over 50 types of moulded bricks. Slightly later (1482), there was Oxbrough Hall in Norfolk, purported to have the most prominent of the English brick gatehouses of the fifteenth century. Then in the sixteenth century Warden Abbey was remodelled in brick. All these works would have made and fired the bricks on site using local clay. By the eighteenth century the lavish Jacobean styling of Houghton House near King's Lynn presented a huge undertaking for bricks made in this way. Up to this time all bricks would have been made at the site

they were to be used, but by the mid-eighteenth century most towns had at least one brickyard to meet the collective needs of the community.

The geology of Bedfordshire provided three types of clay suitable for brickmaking:-

Gault Clay from Arlesey produced a cream-coloured, very hard brick in the period between 1858 and 1928 and was frequently used in the up-market London areas such as Kensington and various department stores.

Flint Clay from the Luton and Dunstable area. Handmade air-dried bricks called Luton Greys were made from 1541. Produced on a small seasonal scale up to World War II, they were fired in clamps taking between two and three weeks.

Lower Oxford Clay is a deep band of clay stretching across Bedfordshire and into the Peterborough area. It was here at a village called Fletton that bricks were produced from this clay, hence bricks made in this way became known as *Flettons*. This was a cheap no-nonsense brick. This clay had two main features: it was easily worked with no need to add water and it was self-firing. It contained organic combustible matter which, when fired, would provide 75% of its own heat. Initially the raw screened clay is mixed with sand or pigment to produce the kind of brick required. It is then pressed into *green* bricks which are then stacked into the chamber of a *Hoffman* kiln. The *Hoffman* kiln provides a continuous process and the green bricks, once stacked, are sealed into the chamber which has access holes to its neighbouring chamber. These holes are blocked using a combustible material which burns through as the temperature rises. The chamber which is already firing now transfers heat through the access holes, increasing the temperature in the second chamber until the self-firing content of the clay is activated. So the process continues from chamber to chamber. Each chamber bakes the bricks at 950°C for up to 14 days. At the top of each chamber is an opening through which the heat can be controlled by the addition of coal dust. This economy of fuel is the key to its commercial success. In Bedfordshire this is centred at the village of Stewartby, originally named after the family who developed the business, but now owned by the London Brick Co. The business had a boom year in 1973 when 20% of the UK's bricks were produced here. This success continued until 1980 after which it began to decline and by 2000 only one works remained open – Stewartby. It, too, closed in 2008. The only works of this kind still open is one at Whittlesey in Cambridgeshire.

Ron Hanson

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Wolverton Railway Works – 8th November 2019

Following the AGM, which the Chairman managed to conclude in four minutes and 45 seconds, we welcomed Phil Marsh who explained that Wolverton was but a small settlement until the opening of the London and Birmingham Railway in

1838. The construction of the line was not without its problems and the opening of the section between Denbigh Hall (near Bletchley) and Rugby was delayed due to problems encountered during the construction of Kilsby Tunnel in Northamptonshire. When it opened it was the world's first long distance railway and was constructed throughout using only manual labour. It was regarded as the *wonder of the age* as it cut journey times between London and Birmingham from about 12 hours by stagecoach to 5½ by train.

Wolverton was situated near the mid-point of the line and the railway company decided to build their locomotive repair works there. As it was a small isolated community the company had to provide housing for its workers as well as other facilities including those for worship, education and leisure. It thus became the world's first purpose built railway town; predating even Swindon and Crewe. The works is still open today and is now the world's longest continuously operating railway works. In the early days locomotives were also serviced at Wolverton and this gave passengers a break at the station where they could obtain refreshments and attend to personal needs.

After a few years the company decided to build locomotives at Wolverton in addition to carrying out repairs and the first locomotive was built in 1845; locomotive work carried on until 1877 when it was transferred to Crewe. By this time the London and Birmingham railway had amalgamated with the Grand Junction Railway to form the London and North Western Railway. Carriage repairs were also carried out at the works and after locomotive work ceased the works became the main LNWR works for the building and repair of carriages. As the works grew extensions were built to the east of the main line (the original works being to the west) and eventually a new main line was built to the east of the works leaving the original line to serve only the works. The carriage works was self contained and was responsible for everything needed to manufacture coaches including all woodwork and upholstery. At the outbreak of the First World War just under 5,000 people were employed at the works.

During both World Wars the works was involved with war work, in the First World War amongst other war work ambulance trains were built by converting passenger carriages so that they could carry the injured on stretchers. 213 employees from the works were killed in this war but were never commemorated on a works memorial; this was remedied by the unveiling of a memorial in September 2019. During the Second World War the works repaired bombers and built *Horsa* gliders. In both wars female labour was employed on a number of tasks that were previously performed by men.

The town has been associated with the royal train since 1869 when it built two six-wheeled coaches for the LNWR royal train. These were not particularly comfortable and in 1895 they were combined onto a single underframe with bogies at each end to give a better ride. Queen Victoria was not keen on change

to the royal train but after her death a new LNWR royal train was built at the works in 1903 for King Edward VII. The London Midland and Scottish Railway built new armoured coaches at the works during the Second World War for the use of the King and Queen and the present royal train was converted at the works for the present Queen's Jubilee in 1977. In addition to building the royal trains they have been housed at the works in a purpose built building when not in use; the original shed has now been converted into flats and the present royal train is housed in a newer building within the works.

The works has seen a considerable reduction in its work and workforce in the last 50 years. The last new carriage left the works in 1963 since when work has been confined mainly to the repair and renovation of passenger-carrying stock. Today total refurbishment of a train can be carried out for about half the cost of a new one. As work had declined much of the works has been sold off and some of the buildings have been demolished and the area redeveloped whilst some have been put to other uses. The works was privatised in 1995 along with the rest of British Rail and has passed through a number of different owners since and is now run by Gemini Rail. The site was sold to a property developer a few years after rail privatisation and at the present time most of the remaining buildings still in use are threatened with demolition and redevelopment. How much longer will Wolverton be the world's longest continuously operating railway works?

Mick Dix

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**Restoration of the Old Grammar School, Market Harborough –
9th December 2019**

For those of us who missed the talk on the Old Grammar School restoration at the Market Harborough EMIAC day, Bryan Martin took us on a journey about the restoration of this small building at the heart of Market Harborough. It



could also be said that for those of us who had heard the talk it was a pleasure to listen and look at his extensive slides again. Bryan told us that the extensive restoration had been planned to mark the Old Grammar School's 400th Anniversary.

A refurbishment had been undertaken in 1868 by the Victorians who had added their ideas to this quite simple building. English Heritage listed the building

as Grade I in 1952 and in the 1970s a local contractor had attempted some restorative work. A full structural survey was done in 2012 as it was clear that the building was in urgent need of repair.

During his research Bryan had noted that the School had been the subject for highways signs – a rubbish bin, Welcome signs and other signs throughout its life. It is still shown on the sign for Market Harborough.

The presentation gave the viewer an insight into the many faults that had been found during Bryan's survey such as the roof slates and ridge tiles badly fitted, the bell tower full of bird droppings and the cladding wrongly fitted as well as upright timbers not braced. Victorian repairs to the timber frames were faulty with butt joints and render between the timbers; softwood which had replaced oak roof timbers and the glass panels cracked in the windows.

The restoration took into account some of the work which had been done by the Victorians and were used as a baseline. During the restoration the building was completely covered as a protection to both the workers and to the general public. Rendering was stripped out to the original build and carefully redone, the cupola and bell were repaired as well as the window frames which remain metal. Internally the floor was stripped to find many items of interest which had slipped through the cracks over many many years and then relaid.

All in all this was one presentation which was most enjoyable and I, having heard the original, was pleased to listen to it again.

Jane Waterfield

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Members Night – 10th January 2020

34 members attended another cracking good evening when we were given four presentations. Geoff West on the 1986 Longtown trip, Mike Ringwood on his visit to Collyweston Slate Mine, Barry Taylor taking us on a tour through old slides and negatives with a railway theme and the annual trip down the 2019 visits by myself. Ed.

Geoff West opened the evening with another look back at a Longtown weekend in 1986. Geoff told members that this weekend was to study the route and remains of the Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway. The railway company was incorporated on 1st August 1859, but was taken over by the L&NWR on the 1st October 1862. The line closed to all traffic on the 2nd



November 1959.

Day one had seen the group following the route through the Clydach gorge; among the sites visited were the Clydach lime works, the Nantdyar viaduct, the Clydach tunnels and the east portals of the Gelli-Felen tunnel (*photo previous page* © Geoff West 1986).

The second day took us further west to the summit of the line at Brynmawr at 1,250ft above sea level. Following the route to Merthyr, we stopped at various sites along the way, such as the Morlais tunnel, the junction with the Brecon & Merthyr railway and the Cefn Coed viaduct. We arrived in Merthyr which ended a very enjoyable weekend. [*Issue 27 gives a fine report by late member Ray Grimes. Ed*]

Barry Taylor gave a fascinating insight to his quest into *Images from the vault*. He told us that the *vault* in question was the archive of the Northamptonshire Record Office, where there were unexpected finds of several early lantern slides and negatives of Northamptonshire scenes.

The first batch was an envelope containing a record of bridge repair work undertaken by Northamptonshire County Council in the early-to-mid 1920s, with views at Ditchford, Lamport crossing, Stoke Bruerne top lock, Wellingborough Ise bridge, Irthlingborough (Butlin's and not Rixon's as stated on the night) ironworks, and also the old Nene bridge near Irthlingborough station. One of the Ise bridge pictures was particularly interesting in that it featured an open-topped, solid-tyred, United Counties double-decker bus operating on route 2 between Wellingborough and Irthlingborough via Finedon.

The lantern slides included a so far unidentified Northamptonshire ironstone quarry, and two fascinating views of railway locations. The first was a pre-



Finedon Road bridge

1907 scene looking southwards from Finedon Road bridge in Wellingborough, featuring a panorama of the engine sheds and sidings, with several locomotives and trains visible on the multitude of lines that then existed. The second railway view was taken at an unknown date at Barford Lodge near Glendon, where a southbound Midland Railway express was seen passing another locomotive shunting in the sidings.

There are apparently more hidden away somewhere in the archives – watch out for part 2!

Finally **Mike Ringwood** told us about his visit to the Collyweston Slate Mine and said that it's actually 150 million year old limestone. Left exposed to nature it will naturally crack after three or four winters – assuming it gets cold enough. The mine started about 1846 and was productive until the 1960s when the warmer winters caused inconsistent cracking. Also as it was seasonal work, winter work for farmers; with changing demographics labour was not readily available.



The Romans used it, hung in a diamond shape, secured by a single peg.

Between 1375 and 1390 14,000 slates were supplied to Rockingham Castle.

English Heritage can be very fussy about preserving old buildings and many people were using second hand slates acquired from derelict buildings. With resources running out, Hallam University were approached to apply a scientific approach. Eventually, they found that soaking the stone for 24 hours, followed by freezing, down to -13°C for 24 hours and repeated over several cycles, the limestone would split naturally. At Collyweston there are two refrigerated containers for this process. Planning applications were submitted to open an adit for mechanised extraction. In 2012 the new method was used successfully to re-roof Apethorpe Palace. The main concern with old roofs is that *improved insulation* over the years has caused pockets of condensation which slowly dissolves the slate. Not noticeable until external holes start appearing.

Collyweston slate is 25% heavier than conventional slate, requiring substantial roof construction, but if lifetime is considered it is the



Current working face © Mike Ringwood 2019

cheapest. The roof angle is between 47 and 65 degrees. Slates are given random names in ½” increments from 6 to 36 inches. About 200sq ft weights a ton. The mine was in full operation in 2017 with a very large contract to supply Kings College, Cambridge.

ARTICLES

Who remembers Decca?

Many NIAG members may remember the Decca record label but how many know of Decca’s contribution to the Second World War?



By the end of the nineteenth century Edison had perfected his phonograph to use a hollow wax cylinder for recording sounds. The phonograph cylinder dominated the recorded sound market into the twentieth century. Although lateral-cut disc records were being developed with a playback speed of about 70 rpm, the introduction of a 10-inch diameter disc in 1901 and a 12-inch disc in 1903 made from a shellac-based material with playing times of about three and four minutes respectively finally heralded the demise of the cylinder-base recordings.

The name Decca was first associated with portable gramophones for playing disc records patented in 1914 by musical instrument makers *Barnett Samuel and Sons* and sold under the tradename Decca. Available from August of that year, many Dulcephones, as they were known, found their way to the Western Front with the British forces.

By 1928 the gramophone-making part of *Barnett Samuel and Sons* had been renamed the *Decca Gramophone Company*. Believing sales of Decca gramophones had peaked, Frank Samuel sold his shares in the company in 1928 with Edward Lewis’s firm acting as broker. Lewis thought the company should build on its worldwide reputation and distribution network through adding record production to its activities. Decca’s board did not agree.

The following year a public issue of shares was instigated by Edward Lewis, to bring together



the manufacture of gramophones with the making of records in one company by acquiring the *Decca Gramophone Company* and merging it with the record making facility that he already owned. Thus, in February 1929 the *Decca Record Company* was born. It should be remembered that the master records



were being created entirely acoustically, the sound being collected by a horn and piped to a diaphragm, which vibrated the cutting stylus. Sensitivity and frequency range were poor; the frequency response was very irregular with an upper limit of about 4 kHz.

During the Second World War Decca engineers were working for the Admiralty Research Laboratory's acoustic range in Loch Goil [off Loch Long] in western Scotland to develop high fidelity hydrophones [underwater microphones]. Here it had been

discovered that the acoustic footprint of a German submarine had a much higher frequency range than that of a corresponding British vessel. That such high frequencies could not be recorded spurred-on Decca's engineers, led by Arthur Haddy, to develop better recording equipment. By employing a moving coil, rather than a diaphragm, to drive the cutting head, the frequency range was increased from 4 kHz to 14 kHz thereby enabling the full frequency range of sound from a U-boat to be recorded.

After the war, this new technique was applied to recording music, etc. and was termed full frequency range recording or ffr. This was later superceded by full frequency stereophonic sound or ffss. The rest, as they say, is history: vinyl records, higher frequency range, the LP, cassette tape recorders and the CD.

This note was inspired by an article in *The Times*:

Stanley, Bob. (2019) How Decca made the Stones, lost the Beatles – and won the war. *The Sunday Times: Times 2*. 10 July. p.8-9.

With additional material from:

https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Decca_Gramophone_Co

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonograph_record

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decca_Records

Terry Waterfield

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Why didn't the trains move? – Software problems

Members may recall that the south-east of the country suffered a major electrical power outage in August 2019 that, not surprisingly, had serious consequences for everyone including the railways. None of the trains were able to move;

even when power was restored 60 Govia Thameslink Railway Class 700 and 717 electrical multiple units refused to move. Where were the diesel-powered Thunderbird rescue trains? 17 technicians were available for immediate dispatch to the stranded trains with a further 24 deployed within the hour. Some 23 trains were in difficult-to-reach locations leading to their evacuation resulting in further service disruptions until late into the evening.

So what went wrong? The simple answer is technology being controlled by software, i.e. computers – that hidden set of instructions that nobody inspects. A more technical answer lies in the technical specifications against which the trains were, or should have been, ordered and accepted and that to which the manufacturers Siemens built the trains.

A lightning strike on the electricity transmission system north of London caused a short-lived disconnection. This was followed by loss of power from an off-shore wind farm and Little Barford power station; their combined loss of power was greater than the nominal reserve of 1,000 MW maintained by the National Grid. The loss of generated power was so great that within a minute the frequency (50 ± 0.5 Hz) of the grid system had been reduced to 48.8 Hz. At this point demand on the grid was reduced by disconnecting users known as the Low Frequency Demand Disconnection (LFDD) to stabilise the frequency. Network Rail, like other major consumers, was not aware that their loads could be subject to LFDD. With the available reserve and addition generation capacity brought on-line, grid security was achieved within five minutes and full power was restored within 45 minutes.

Located between the pantograph and the train's main transformer is a circuit breaker to protect the trains electrical systems should a fault occur. As happened here, this is opened should the frequency of the supply at the pantograph fall below 49 Hz, which Siemens claim is in accordance with EN50163 *Railway Applications - Supply Voltages of Traction Systems* standard. They also claim that after a protective shutdown, the system should reset itself when the frequency rises above 49.5 Hz allowing the train to be recoverable by a battery reset. However, Network Rail specifications state that trains will continue to operate when the supply frequency drops to 48.5 Hz.

Further investigation revealed that Siemens had removed the ability for drivers to undertake a battery reset in version 3.27 of the Train Control Management System software. Hence the need for a laptop-wielding technician to visit every stricken train. Trains fitted with software version 3.25 or lower were able to be rebooted by the driver. Needless to say Siemens are having work on a patch to allow trains to recover themselves when the supply frequency falls below 49 Hz.

The reader is left to decide who was to blame for this major disruption to rail services.

Terry Waterfield

Sources:

Ford, R. (2019) Power failure highlights specification confusion, *Modern Railways*, October, p. 26-28.

Clinnick, R. (ed) (2019) Software prevented GTR trains from being reset, *Rail*, Sept 25-October 8, No 888, p.11.

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Derngate Bus Station model

Member Clive Hardwick has sent in an article on his model of the Derngate Bus Station. An invitation from the editor to members for you to send in your recollections of this Bus Station with photos if possible. Ed

The third of my Northamptonshire models that I could loosely call *Industrial* (following the True-Form shoe factory and the Braunston Pump House) is the Derngate Bus Station which I started in November 2015 and which took me about nine months to make. Due to the sheer size of the original I have had to use some modeller's licence to reduce the number of internal bus bays and truncate somewhat the road frontage. Nevertheless, the model is still some 48cm x 60cm in area and about 16cm high. Despite this enforced reduction, I still feel I have captured the essential character and function of the building.

The original building was constructed between 1934 and 1936 by the United Counties Omnibus Company in an Art Deco style that was very much the architectural style of the company at that time. The main builder was Messrs A.

Glenn & Sons. It served both as the head office and the hub for the company's Northampton-area routes for around 40 years before activities were transferred to the newly-built Greyfriars bus station in the 1970s, eventually to be demolished and the Derngate Theatre built on the site in the early 1980s.



© Clive Hardwick

The model is 1:76 scale (*photo above*) and is constructed largely out of styrene and painted and weathered in enamels and acrylics. I have made the roof removable to enable a detailed interior to be modelled. I have also modified some of the commercially available United Counties model buses to feature local advertising and destination blinds.

I wrote an illustrated article about the making of the model for *Model Rail* magazine and that appeared in their pre-Christmas 2016 edition. I was gratified to receive, via the editor, a number of letters and e-mails from as near as Mears Ashby and as far as Australia, from people for whom the article had stirred pleasant memories of earlier times. All said that I had managed to capture the grime and dinginess of the cavernous interior, and that they could almost smell the diesel fumes!! I even had an email forwarded to me from Simon Kohler, ex-Marketing Director of Hornby Railways no less, who fondly recalled meeting his then girlfriend off the 321 bus from New Duston back in the late 50s!

I confess that I rarely visited the bus station myself; being a ‘townie’ meant red bus rides not green! Hopefully though, I’ve managed to capture something of the essence of a significant feature of Northampton life for thousands of people over a good number of years.

Clive Hardwick



Detail of the inside © Clive Hardwick

UPDATES

The K2 Red Telephone Box

The original red telephone box is to get an upgrade to grade II* listed. Created in 1924 by the architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, the K2 (Kiosk No2) red phone box has formed the basis of all incarnations since. The design is one of Scott’s crowning achievements, alongside Battersea Power Station. The prototype, meanwhile, sits tucked away under an arch in front of the Royal Academy in London, where it has been since its creation. Scott answered a call by the Royal Fine Arts Commission, at the request of the Postmaster-General, for a replacement for the unpopular concrete model. He was inspired by the tomb designed in 1816 by Sir John Soane for his wife. (*This stands in St Pancras Old Church churchyard, London*). The K2 design was put on display in Trafalgar Square alongside four other candidates but in 1925 was deemed the *most suitable for erection in busy thoroughfares of large towns*.

Only about 200 K2s survive today. Most of the phone boxes still standing are the K6 model, also by Scott, which replaced the K2 in 1935. The 1986 the K2 prototype was grade II listed. It has now been upgraded by Historic England, which has decided that it is not just *of special interest* but of *more than special interest*. The chief executive of Historic England said that the design represented a milestone in industrial design.

Other structures besides buildings that are grade II* include statues of Peter Pan and the suffragettes Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst and many war memorials.

The Times – 27th December 2019

Whitechapel Bell Foundry hotel plans on hold

Whitechapel Bell Foundry has been given a temporary reprieve as the Government's Housing Secretary, Robert Jenrick has intervened to halt the proposed conversion of the site to a boutique hotel, to allow other options to be considered. The Whitechapel Foundry, which is where Big Ben, the Liberty Bell, Bow Bells and many of the world's great bells were cast, ceased operation in 2017 and plans to convert the Grade II*-listed building into a boutique hotel were approved by Tower Hamlets Council in November 2019. The decision attracted widespread criticism, both locally and within the heritage community. We await the results of the current considerations with interest.

Loughborough Bell Foundry

Meanwhile, plans to restore Britain's now only remaining operating bell foundry, John Taylor's in Loughborough, have progressed thanks to a development grant by the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the first phase of the project. Detailed plans are now being developed for a round two bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to secure the future of the bell foundry. This would include the repair of the two bell foundry buildings, an overhaul of the existing small museum and the restoration of the unique carillon tower. Caroe Architecture have been appointed to lead the design team on the project. Professor Marilyn Palmer (AIA president) is acting as consultant.

Above two articles – AIA e-News bulletin – January 2020

Vulcan Works, Northampton

Significant progress has been made on the £14 million Vulcan Works creative business workspace project in Northampton town centre, according to the council. A total of 59 lettable units aimed at start-ups and growing businesses are being built in derelict industrial buildings between Guildhall Road, Angel Street, Fetter Street and St Johns Street, plus two new buildings. The search is now on for an operator with an appointment expected in the summer. Steelwork is completed and the façade is well under way at the Angel Street element, where a topping out ceremony was due to be held on the 29th January.

Northampton Chronicle & Echo – 30th January 2020

MISCELLANY OF ITEMS OF INTEREST

Cranham Publications – Puzzles

The above company are responsible for making jigsaws and have currently four associated with the Imperial War Museums World War 1 and 2 recruitment posters. Having completed the first of the four titled WW1 Home Front Posters I then decided to purchase the rest since I enjoy doing puzzles on mainly wet afternoons. Inside the box was a sheet of interesting information and below I produce first about the company and then the two companies associated with Cranham Publications. Ed.

The company is a small family business and has been producing smartly packaged British-made jigsaw puzzles for twenty years. The puzzles are made of 2mm thick recycled board.

MM Bell & Sons make the presentation boxes. Originally founded in 1816, their factory was located in Arundel Lane, Sheffield at the time of the First World War. They primarily made cardboard boxes for the cutlery trade as well as manufacturing stationery products in the war years. Sheffield was a centre for armament and munitions production and Bells would have contributed to the war effort by making rigid boxes for related items – from knives to bullets. As with most businesses at the time, a number of the male workforce enlisted, including A E Bell who joined the Hallamshire regiment for the duration of the war.

James Cropper plc has been making specialist paper at its Burneside mills near Kendal since 1845, and their current range includes the Wibalin paper used to cover the puzzle boxes. The First World War had a big impact on production at the mill, and company records show the following interesting facts. In September James Cropper & Co was contracted by De la Rue printers to manufacture 800 tons of Colonial Postcard paper, and by 1916, over three-quarters of the paper made at Burneside was being supplied directly and indirectly to the British government. Its uses included Inland Revenue forms and envelopes, postal wrappers, Colonial postcards, and a wide range of War Office stationery requirements. Production had been affected by labour shortages due to enlistment, and by October 1915 almost 120 male employees of military age had joined up – many of whom had been recruited since the beginning of the War. Twenty-three employees were killed in conflict, and the paper mill continues to pay tribute to their lives, having supplied the red and green paper for Remembrance Day poppies since 1978.

Taken from the information sheet within the Cranford puzzle

Whitechapel Bell Foundry, London

Plans to redevelop Whitechapel Bell Foundry into a boutique hotel have been controversially approved. Tower Hamlets Council's development committee voted three against and three in favour, with the chairman using his casting vote to approve it. The council received more than 750 objections to the proposals

to redevelop the historic building, home of Britain's oldest manufacturing firm which operated from 1570 until it closed the site in 2016 [sic]. There were five letters of support.

One councillor told the development committee the plans would amount to 'historical vandalism'.

GLIAS newsletter no.305 – December 2019

Whitechapel's Bell Foundry reprieve, London

Bong! After the recent turmoil within his family, here is news to gladden the Prince of Wales's spirits. For it can be disclosed that a part of East London dear to his heart – the historic foundry which made Big Ben – is one step closer to preservation, thanks in no small part to the efforts of the charity of which HRH is founding patron.

The Whitechapel Bell Foundry seemed destined for conversion into a 108-room, six storey hotel, complete with roof-top pool, by a US investment group which bought it for £7.9 million in 2016. Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, has now ruled that the foundry's fate must be the subject of national debate and a public inquiry, following an impassioned campaign which has garnered international support, plus the backing of TV historian Dan Cruickshank, artist Grayson Perry and, crucially, that of HRH's charity, *Re-Form Heritage*.

Aside from Big Ben – weighing in at 13.5 tons – the foundry also made the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia and the bells of St Clement's which feature in the nursery rhyme *Oranges and Lemons*, and the eight Royal Jubilee bells cast to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. Each was named after the senior members of the Royal Family: Elizabeth, Philip, Charles, Anne, Andrew, Edward, William and Henry [*Harry*]. HRH celebrated by visiting the foundry to strike the bell bearing his name.

But the preservation of the foundry is more than a purely family affair. *Re-Form Heritage* is intent on restoring the foundry so as to help regenerate the local community. Cruickshank says: "*It is absolutely correct that the future of such an ancient and important enterprise be fully and objectivity examined before an irreversible decision is made. Anything less than a rigorous public inquiry would have been a betrayal of history.*"

Daily Mail – 24th January 2020 – Sebastian Shakespeare's column

More protected sites

A wind tunnel designed to test how pilots might overcome fatal spins is one of the latest structures to become a listed building. The Vertical Spinning Tunnel, part of a former laboratory complex in Milton Ernest, Bedfordshire, is one of 500 places given new or enhanced protected status this year by Historic England alongside a Shakespearean playhouse in east London and the location for the Monty Python sketch Mr Creosote. The upright steel tunnel, built between

1948 and 1955, was designed so that aeroplane models up to 7ft wide could be positioned above a large fan. The tunnel is still in working order and today is used by people wanting to replicate the sensation of skydiving.

Other military sites to be preserved include a Second World War practice bombing range indicator – a large concrete arrow in the ground; The Curtain playhouse, built in Shoreditch in 1577, is also on the list. *Romeo and Juliet* was staged there during Shakespeare's lifetime; the 1920s Porchester Centre in Bayswater, London, has been upgraded to Grade II* which was used in the Monty Python film *The Meaning of Life* in 1982. It is said that England is home to many historic iconic and sometimes quirky sites.

Other sites on the list are:

The Curtain Playhouse, Shoreditch, London – remains of the Elizabethan theatre discovered in excavations in 2011 – becomes a scheduled monument.

Plazza Fountain, Beetham Place, Liverpool – known as the Bucket Fountain, this water sculpture was made in the late 1980s and has been listed as Grade II.

Second World War practice bombing range indicator and observation post at Putsborough Sands, North Devon, are listed at Grade II.

K1 phone kiosk, Newsholme Dean, West Yorkshire – a few of Britain's first national telephone kiosks remain. It has been listed at Grade II.

The Times – 20th December 2019

Other heritage sites making it into protected status are:

Two 19th century shipwrecks, a cab driver's shelter in Central London, Birmingham children's hospital, a drinking fountain in Lytham St Annes, Lancs and a former chemist shop. Also mentioned are a Lido at Cheltenham, a chapel at Engleby, North Yorkshire and a shop front in Lowestoft, Suffolk.

Historic England revealed its top 21 unusual buildings and sites to have been listed or given enhanced status this year (2019). They are drawn from more than 500 historic places which have been added to the National Heritage List for England in 2019.

Daily Express – 20th December 2019.

Fairey Barracuda aircraft battery still works

After 76 years on the seabed, the Second World War torpedo bomber was not exactly in good working order. So marine archaeologists were astonished to discover that a battery on the Fairey Barracuda, which crashed off Portsmouth, still worked. The Royal Navy aircraft was found during seabed survey of the Solent before the laying of an underwater electricity cable and was salvaged in June. It ditched after taking off from HMS *Daedalus* at Lee-on-the-Solent, Hampshire in 1943. Among the salvaged parts were two 12V batteries. David Morris, curator at the National Museum of the Royal Navy, said the aircraft had been fairly intact. He said: "*We cleaned the batteries up and left them to dry in a corner of the hanger for a couple of weeks. I saw William Gibbs, our restoration engineer,*

heading towards them with a voltmeter and I thought, 'You've got to be kidding'." Mr Morris said that it was a treasured moment when one was found to have a tiny bit of residual power.

The Times – 10th December 2019

Cumbrian Coal Mine Approved.

Woodhouse Colliery, the controversial new deep coal mine near Workington (sic), in Cumbria, has been given authorisation to proceed by the Government and local authorities. The colliery will produce high-quality coking coal for the Steel industry, both in the UK and for export, much of which is expected to be transported by rail when the facility opens in 2022.

In an article in the same magazine mention is made of the *Tyne Valley Line* which says the fact that coal traffic was a regular sight until the downturn in transport of coal for electricity generation. The line is expected to be used as a primary route for coal for steel-making, which will be mined at the new Woodhouse Colliery, Near Whitehaven, and transported to Redcar Bulk Terminal for export.

Information via Geoff West – Railway Magazine, January 2020

There seems to be some discrepancy between the Colliery being based at Workington and Whitehaven. Workington is further up the coast from Whitehaven and the Tyne Valley line runs from Carlisle to Newcastle. According to Google the Colliery is at Whitehaven and this is supported by a write up on Wikipedia. £14.7 million is to be invested in this venture which should now be up and running. It is predicted that 3,300,000 tons will be mined with full production expected in 2023. The mine is expected to have a life of 50 years, employing 500 workers with the possibility the area contains over 830,000,000 tons of coal in its reserves. 80% of the output from the mine has been promised to be railed out of the area to Redcar Bulk Terminal on Teesside for export. The main source of transport is the Cumbrian Coast Line with six trains per day taking the coal from one side of the country to the other.

*Above information taken from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodhouse_Colliery
– January 2020.*

Wetherspoons pub named with an industrial connection

In the last issue (153 – page 17) I wrote about the naming of pubs with an industrial connection by the Wetherspoons chain of public houses. Here is another. Ed.

St. Pancras Station: The new Wetherspoons pub below the station's Southeastern platforms has been christened *The Barrel Vault*, to commemorate the area's former role as the storage area for Burton beer barrels.

Rail magazine – 16-29th January 2019

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NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTY

Towcester Railway Running Board

Towcester Mill Brewery is now the proud new custodian of Towcester Railway Station's sign, following the agreement of a long-term loan by Towcester Museum to Towcester Mill. The sign was officially unveiled by Sally Willett, curator from Towcester Museum, and Nigel Furniss, from The Stratford-upon-Avon & Midland Junction Railway (SMJ) on October 11th 2019.

Towcester Station, which used to be located on the site of what is now Tesco, had four of these *running boards*, two on each platform. And, thanks to the Towcester Museum & Visitor Centre, the Brewery was given the opportunity to look after the sign and display it for all to see. At nine feet long, it cannot be missed. The *running-board* is pre-1906 so it would have been in use during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. It is amazing that the sign survived, considering it was used for many years as part of a roof for some local chicken hutches. Eventually it was salvaged, restored and finally donated for display.

Sent in by Geoff West with a date of 15th October.

Taken from 'About MyArea' website



John Evans, Towcester Mill Brewery; Sally Willett, Towcester Museum;
Nigel Furniss, SMJ Society © Aboutmyarea.co.uk

Eleanor Cross, Northampton – removal from risk register

Repair and conservation work on the Northampton's Eleanor Cross is now complete and it is being removed from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. The conservation experts from Killington Workshop have been busy since April [2019] ensuring the monument continues to be preserved for future generations. Work included mortar repairs, re-pointing, addition of stainless steel pins to the north and west canopies providing additional support, fitting new stone where essential and shelter coating. Historic England, which is covering half of the project costs, has been consulted throughout the process.

The cross, at the southern end of London Road close to Delapre Wood, was one of a dozen commissioned by Edward I between 1291 and 1294. Only three remain. (Charing Cross, London, Northampton and Geddington – though there is a replica at Sledmere in Yorkshire). Each marks one of the nightly resting places of the funeral procession of the King's wife, Queen Eleanor, between Harby and London.

Northampton Chronicle & Echo – 28th November 2019

Wellingborough Roundhouse

Members of a Wellingborough campaign group have voiced their concerns over the future of a town landmark. The Wellingborough Roundhouse was built in 1872 to house Midland Railways locomotives and a large turntable. After closure as a rail shed the red brick building saw use as a warehouse for Whitworths and Totectors but now Wellingborough Civic member Bob Townson fears its future is in doubt. He said: *“This building has stood for 148 years with original brickwork and most roofing. Many rail enthusiasts and ex-workers are in support of the Wellingborough Civic Society to ask for this building to be retained and converted for other use. If the façade and excellent internal shed features from the Midland Railway days could be saved this could be converted to an indoor market, with very little cost compared to a pull down and rebuild on site. There are many good examples of these as close as Market Harborough. It would only take a bit of foresight to not pull it down but [to] regenerate [it]”*.



© Ron Whittaker 2020

Now owned by Bovis Homes the roundhouse, which sits on land which is part of the Stanton Close development, can be found on the Roundhouse Way – the Finedon Road to Midland Road route also known as Route 9.

In 2011, attempts were made to get the shed listed but the then Secretary of State decided not to do so, under advice from Historic England, because too few original features remain. Built in 1872 and 1873, the roundhouse went out of use in 1966. A Wellingborough Council spokesman said: *“Bovis has confirmed that the building has been fenced off for safety reasons and that asbestos and structural surveys are being carried on the building. The council is working with developers to assess the options available and has expressed the importance of retaining the building, if it is safe and viable to do so.”* Once results have been submitted the council will then establish the best way forward with the developers. Bovis Homes is said to hope to have a clearer idea in the coming months as to whether the building can be retained.

Northants Evening Telegraph – 16th January 2020.

Thank you to Ron for this information about this important piece of our industrial heritage which no doubt both the Council and Bovis Homes hope that the results are less than favourable and will knock it down rather than convert into something useful.

Ron also tells me that the area around the Roundhouse (which is actually a square building!) has only just been opened up with the building of the road bridge over Wellingborough

station and the associated access road to the A510 Finedon Road. It has been done to allow the development of the major Stanton Cross housing estate. The Irthlingborough to Wellingborough Road is becoming unrecognisable with the rapid growth of houses! With the new road access (called Roundhouse Way) to the Roundhouse building he managed to take a couple of photos of the Roundhouse whilst the weather was good on the 20th January. Ron's e-mail was dated the 20th January 2020. Ed.

Pearce Leatherworks – flats approval

A former leatherworks building in Northampton will be converted into 20 flats after councillors approved the planning application. The scheme for the former Pearce Leatherworks factory, located on Wellingborough Road, was unanimously approved. The Art-Deco office was used for more than 60 years and the original factory, which stood behind it, was demolished for housing in 2010, with 126 homes having already been built there.

Northampton Chronicle & Echo – January 30th 2020

Higham Ferrers

The 3rd November was the 50th anniversary of the final closure to goods of the Midland Railway branch from Irchester Junction. Although the station site has long been cleared of its buildings, it is the long-term aim of the Rushden, Higham and Wellingborough Railway to return to the town.

Rail – 20th November-3rd December 2019

Northampton Gateway freight interchange

Work can start soon on the new Northampton Gateway freight interchange, following the Department for Transport decision to approve the scheme. It will be located on the Northampton loop, close to Junction 15 of the M1. A major landscaping exercise will be undertaken to minimise noise and pollution.

Rail – 18th December 2019-1st January 2020

Warehouses at Junction 16 of the M1

Three large warehouse and distribution units have been granted planning permission near junction 16 of the M1. The buildings will be constructed on the western half of a site that neighbours the A4500 and the Red Lion truck-stop. The three units are 40,000 sq.ft, 35,000 sq.ft. and 23,000 sq.ft. respectively with each offering mostly warehouse and distribution space, but also some offices.

Northampton Chronicle & Echo – 20th February 2020

It is already a nightmare for driving into Northampton. It will become more so when yet more heavy vehicles use this junction and the A45. Do we really need more warehousing down the Northampton M1 corridor and don't even think about the proposal at junction 15 and the rail freight scenario. Ed.

Northampton in 50 Buildings – new book

A new book which explores the history of Northants through a selection of its most interesting buildings and structures has now been published. *Northampton*

in 50 Buildings by Lorna Talbott. will appeal to history-lovers and residents alike, according to Amberley Publishing.

The latest in the 'in 50 Buildings' series reveals how the Norman Conquest, the English Civil War, a great fire in the 17th century and expansion in the 1960s all had an impact on the area's architecture.

Northampton Chronicle & Echo – 20th February 2020

Googling the relevant information tells me that the book is paperback, costs £14.99, has 96 pages and the ISBN number is 9781445695136 which is more than the paper told the reader! I should add that the paper featured a photograph of the Malcolm Inglis building in Fish Street, Northampton seen on our walk in 2018. Ed.

OF THIS AND THAT

Input to new edition of NIAG Gazetteer

NIAG is planning to produce and publish a Third Edition of its Guide to the Industrial Heritage of Northamptonshire, the gazetteer of notable former industrial buildings and structures in the county. The second Edition was published back in 2011 and sold out a couple of years ago. Since it was published, there have inevitably been changes; a few sites have disappeared, while others have been modified or changed in some way. There may be sites which have not been included to date but which members think ought to be. Sites are chosen for a variety of reasons, including importance to their respective industry, for historical or architectural interest or because they had an unusual industrial use. Members are therefore invited to suggest current or former industrial sites which they feel ought to be included in the Third Edition and a reason for including it. As long as there is some physical evidence remaining, in the form of a building, structure or earthwork, it will be considered for inclusion.

Please contact Peter Perkins with your suggestions: *01604 812614* or *secretary@niag.org.uk*

Peter Perkins

Regarding the 2020 Summer programme

As briefly mentioned in the Editor's piece, NIAG is no longer able to stand a loss with any visits which are arranged and paid for before the notification of the event in the Summer programme. If you wish to attend a visit which has a cost attached, a cheque payable to NIAG (non refundable if unable to attend) must be sent to the event organiser with booking – their contact details will be on the programme notes.

The Committee.

2020 Anniversaries

The Regent's Canal will be 200 years old during this year. Events are being

planned.

The sailing of the **Mayflower** took place 400 years ago in 1620.

Croydon Airport was 100 years old in March.

Information from GLIAS newsletter 305 – December 2019.

Dates for the Diary

1st May Summer programme begins.

2nd May EMIAC 98 at Matlock Bath - booking closed.

Spring The Northampton Museum and Art Gallery re-opens. Check press for details..

24th October EMIAC 99: NIAG hosts the day at Roade. Booking forms and details with the July Newsletter.

Exhibitions

30th March to 2nd June

Abington Park Museum – ‘*Photos for All Seasons – Spring*’. Features the work of Abington Camera Club (Northampton). Museum open: April-October, Thursday-Sunday & Bank Holiday Mondays. 1-5pm.

To summer 2021:

BAFTA: Behind the Screens: This exhibition shows what goes on to supply what you see on the film and television screen: costumes, props, scripts and audio-visual displays. Venue: next to BAFTA’s building (as that’s being refurbished), 194 Piccadilly, London. Free. Open Mon-Fri 8.00 am to 6.00 pm ; weekends 12.00 noon to 6.00 pm.

And Finally:

Getting it wrong in 1964!

Spotted in the Times on the 14th November 2019, which I found to be amusing enough to share with you all. Ed.

Tales of election mishaps were received by the Times on a fairly regular basis. This one concerns a campaigner Barrington Black who did his campaigning for the Liberals in Harrogate in 1964 on horseback. (As you do!)

At one stop, he said that the strength of his cause was “*like this mighty stallion*”, to which a bystander observed “*Have another look, mate. It’s a mare.*”

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Coming Up:

Remembering microfilm readers

Award for the Engine Shed, Northampton

Final winter reports



The Nantdyar viaduct © Geoff West 1986

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Newsletter

Next Issue: **July 2020**

Deadline for all articles and information 1st June 2020. Anything received after this date will be held over to the next edition.

Article guidelines: Ideally should be no more than about 1200 words, unless the article is of a special interest, and accompanied by photographs or diagrams. Shorter articles are always welcome. Photographs are encouraged to illustrate all articles and will be inserted if submitted. The Editor will be happy to discuss the author's requirements.

Please submit by e-mail or mail. Photographs/slides/diagrams sent by first class post will be returned to you the same way. Illustrations submitted via e-mail should be sent as separate attachments to text; they should be in one of the standard formats (JPEG, TIFF, SVG, etc), and images must be at least 2.2 megapixels in dimension. Please give information about the photograph, e.g. a caption and date. Please also include your name so that you can be credited with taking the photographs.