

Proposed Society for Industrial History & Archaeology in North East Derbyshire.

Newsletter No. 1 - January 2001

Thanks to the people who have supported the formation of the group, or society, and the encouraging comments received. So far, just under twenty people have recorded their support. Where we go from here is open for discussion but, as tentative first steps, this newsletter has been written, a meeting place has been booked and first meetings arranged. It is hoped that further progress can be announced at the first meeting and, if time permits, some discussion can be had after the main speaker's presentation.

Inaugural Meeting:

Tuesday, 20th February 2001,

Dudley Fowkes of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society has kindly agreed to talk about the guide to industrial archaeological sites in north east Derbyshire, launched by DAS last autumn to complete their series on the county.

Further Meetings

Tuesday, 20th March - Malcolm Bond will give a talk on the **Ashover Light Railway**, illustrated with slides. The railway emerged after World War I and served the quarries at Fallgate and Ashover Butts for around thirty years, as well as providing passenger services to the Amber valley before the age of the motorbus and the ubiquitous motorcar.

Tuesday, 24th April- Subject and speaker to be announced shortly. Venue booked but confirmation of speaker currently awaited. **[Update 20th Feb. - The speaker will now be Derek Bayliss and the subject Sheffield's industrial heritage]**

May meeting - Not yet arranged but, hopefully, to be open for general discussion and members' slides. This is an invitation to bring along slides, photographs or any other material for display, whether on local industrial archaeological topics or from a wider sphere. **[Update 20th Feb. - The meeting will take place on 22nd May, subject as above.]** .

Time & Place

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings will be held at the **Friends Meeting House, Chesterfield**, in the ground floor room at **7.30pm (1930 hours)**. The meeting house can be found on the corner of Ashgate Road and Brockwell Lane. Entrance is from Ashgate Road. There is limited car parking on site but ample space is available in the car park on the opposite side of Ashgate Road (free in evenings).

Costs

To cover the cost of hiring the room and speakers' expenses, a contribution of £1.50 will be requested from those attending each meeting.

Summer visits

Ideas for visits to sites of industrial interest would be appreciated, bearing in mind the most likely mode of transport being by shared private cars. Initial suggestions include a guided tour of Scunthorpe steelworks, by preserved steam train. The trip lasts about two hours and covers some of the works' 90 miles of railway, with a commentary on steel making and glimpses of red hot steel being rolled in the mills. The tours run on summer Saturdays and Sundays, with the cost covered by voluntary contributions. Bookings have to be made in advance, so an early indication of numbers interested would enable enquiries to be made on possible dates.

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Nearer to home, examination of the industries of Lumsdale has been mentioned as of interest and, without wishing to steal Dave Dwelly's thunder on his coverage within the Derbyshire Landscapes WEA course, we might try for a guided tour using the auspices of the Arkwright Society.

Other possibilities include the canal, tramway and railways of the Churnet valley in north Staffordshire or the salt industries around Northwich. The Anderton Boat Lift, connecting the Trent & Mersey Canal with the Weaver Navigation near Northwich, is at long last in course of restoration.

New Books

Two books have recently been noticed, albeit at different ends of the spectrum

Benjamin Outram, 1764-1805 An Engineering Biography - by R B Schofield and published by Merton Priory Press Ltd, (ISBN 1 898937427) 340pp, for £24.95. The book covers not only Outram's life but also his work on several Derbyshire canals and many others, as well as the founding of the ironworks at Butterley.

Railway Inn Signs, Volume 1, Derbyshire - by Bryan Veitch, published by Meridian Books (ISBN 1 869 922425) at £8.95. This subject surely merits further research!

The transition of inns and hotels from staging points on turnpike roads and canals, to adjuncts to railway stations, their location often gives clues to an otherwise vanished form of transport. Artistic licence on the frequent use of locomotives from the wrong railway company on inn signs has often been a source of irritation to railway buffs. One hopes the author has also recorded Alfreton's "Railway Hotel" which, until its recent closure for demolition, bore a sign of a main line steam locomotive. Given that the public house had been named in anticipation of the arrival of the abortive Alfreton extension of the Nottingham-Ripley electric tramway, it was long a curiosity in the town.

Ramblings

Apart from the distressing trend of press announcements of industrial site closures in north east Derbyshire, the current large-scale clearance of the foundry site at Renishaw, seen in early December, emphasised the relevance of having a society dedicated to the recording of our industrial past. Having driven past the Renishaw site for many years, I was not aware of its extent until the earth moving equipment had left its mark. That site is not alone as, nearer to home, we have the Markham works site being similarly treated as well as the wooden goods shed of the former Midland Railway, which disappeared almost overnight as part of the renovation of Chesterfield railway station.

Other curiosities seen recently include a wrought iron cattle water trough at Grassmoor (in field opposite the office equipment showroom). The curved shape and heavy rivets of the trough suggest it might have been part of a 'haystack' style steam boiler? Also, on Stead Street, Eckington, two walls can be seen in which a large number of round vessels have inserted. The walls are at the ends of properties on High Street and the vessels look, at very quick glance, as if they might have been steel crucibles of the type still seen at Abbeydale Industrial hamlet. Any clarification of the actual origin of these oddities would be welcome.

Future Issues

It is hoped to produce two further issues in 2001, in spring and autumn, to update subscribers on the latest programmes. Written contributions for publication would be gratefully received. To ensure you receive future copies of this newsletter and are included on the mailing list for the next year, will readers please send 4 x 2nd Class stamps to the address below.

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