

North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society

NEDIAS Newsletter No. 12 – November 2003

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N.E.D.I.A.S

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Chairman's Comments:

After the first two meetings of this season, writing these comments is an easy task. The talks, by Philip Riden on workers' housing and by Hugh Potter on the Cromford Canal, were very well attended and deservedly so. Chairs, and our members in the kitchen, coped admirably with the demands placed upon them. Strong contributions from two eminent historians, to be followed by articles from both of them soon to be published within these pages. Little wonder that our membership continues to grow at a steady pace and, to those for whom this is their first issue of our Newsletter, may I extend a warm welcome. May you and our earlier members stay with us for many years to come.

Longevity has been marked by two notable events I attended during October. The first was the commemoration in Newcastle of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Robert Stephenson, son of George, builder of the "Rocket" and pioneer civil engineer, albeit often overshadowed by his father's public reputation. It is surprising that such an important industrial site as the South Street works of Robert Stephenson & Co. in Newcastle has only been conserved and recently opened to the public. The works, established in 1823, where *Locomotion No. 1*, the *Rocket*, the *Planet* and other important locomotives were constructed, was the first purpose built locomotive factory in the world, yet saving it has been a long struggle for a large group of enthusiastic and dedicated people.

The second event took place in the Mappin Hall at Sheffield University to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of the South Yorkshire Industrial History Society, its inaugural meeting having been held in that same hall on 30th October 1933. Sir Neil Cossons, Chairman of English Heritage, addressed members and guests on "What Future for the Industrial Past". In his lecture Sir Neil noted with some regret that there were more than 2,700 archaeologists in Britain today but only a handful were working on the remains of the industrial age. Given that the last two hundred years had left by far the greatest mark on our landscape, there surely must be a case for industrial archaeology being held in greater esteem in the land of academe.

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What has any of this got to do with the price of fish, I hear you ask? We have a number of buildings in the area around Chesterfield, which deserve better than a decline towards abandonment and demolition. The history of the Clay Cross Company's works goes back to the lifetimes of George and Robert Stephenson yet stand silent and still, their future uncertain. The Smith's, then Robinson's, "Cannon Mill" building is similarly decaying, unused. The Derbyshire Times recently drew attention to two other Robinson buildings believed to have unique qualities in industrial archaeological terms (See notes from Darrell Clark on this subject later). One of the concerns of the founding members of NEDIAS, a very modest three years ago, was the need to obtain recognition of the importance of the fast disappearing remains of the industrial age in this area. In short, isn't there something we should be doing, and starting soon?

Maybe you know that NEDIAS has attended the Derbyshire VCH Local History Fair, held at the Arkwright Centre on Saturday 1st November. This year's NEDIAS table at the event featured a computer generated visual display showing some of our activities in the last twelve months and a display of drawings, photographs and artefacts from the Damstead Project. Thanks are due to the members who supported our stand on the day, particularly Cliff Lea for organising our presence, setting up and manning the stall throughout the day, Paul Smith for putting together the Damstead material and David Rance for his 'guided tours' of the display. In addition to public awareness on the day, we got a mention in the Derbyshire Times' Grassroots column complete with a plug for our next meeting! Well done, Cliff, Paul & David - can't wait to see what you will come up with next year!

David Wilmot

WHAT'S ON?

NEDIAS Lecture Programme, 2003/2004

When: Meetings are usually held the second Monday of each month, start time 7.30.
Where: The Friends Meeting House, Ashgate Road, Chesterfield (junction of Brockwell Lane).
Cost: Free to NEDIAS members but visitors are asked for a donation of £2 for each meeting.
Further details: See our special NEDIAS Lecture Programme information brochure.

8th December, 2003: -	Peter Machen; <i>The Development of Sheffield Trades</i>
12th January, 2004: -	Ann Hodson; <i>Memories of Barker Pottery</i>
19th January, 2004: -	Social evening for members and partners, Civil Service Club, Calow.
9th February, 2004: -	Peter Hawkins; <i>Markham's 1889-2000</i>
8th March, 2004: -	AGM & Members' Evening
19th April, 2004: -	Andrew Firth; <i>Hulley's Buses</i>
10th May, 2004: -	Ken Horan; <i>Railway Steam to Diesel - A Regional Perspective</i>

Company Housing in the Derbyshire Coalfield

by Philip Riden

September's talk to the society was by Philip Riden, the County Editor for Derbyshire for the Victoria County History project, which is based at Nottingham University, where Philip is a principal research fellow. His subject was company housing in the Derbyshire coalfield—mainly the northern half of the coalfield around Chesterfield, Clay Cross and Alfreton. Philip has kindly scripted the following resume of his presentation.

Philip began by explaining that although company housing was a familiar feature of north Derbyshire mining villages, this was not the case throughout the British coalfield: in South Wales, for example, most housing was privately built and much of it owner-occupied, although conversely much of the housing in the Great Northern coalfield was employer-provided. Thus it was interesting to look at how the tradition of company housing had developed in Derbyshire.

The earliest company housing on the coalfield was built by some of the larger ironworks in the early nineteenth century and what appears to be the very first such housing, built by Benjamin Outram & Co. (later the Butterley Company) in 1796 at Golden Valley near Swanwick has survived. Interestingly, Butterley was among the last companies to continue building housing, notably at New Ollerton in the Dukeries coalfield in the 1920s. Butterley went on to develop a large housing estate around Ripley and are best known for their village of Ironville near their Codnor Park works. By no means all the other iron companies of this period followed their example. James Oakes & Co. built houses at Riddings near Ironville but Ebenezer Smith & Co. of Chesterfield seem to have built few if any, presumably because there was a ready supply of privately built housing in a town like Chesterfield, whereas Butterley and Oakes were operating in rural areas. Nor did Joseph Butler build houses at either his Wingerworth ironworks or his other sites in the Rother valley.

It is impossible from surviving records to decide why Butterley began building houses in Golden Valley in 1796. They may have been following the example of the Derwent Valley cotton mill owners, such as Arkwright, Strutt and Evans, or they may simply have decided that there was no alternative means of housing large numbers moving into a relatively remote area. What is clear is that rents were set to produce a normal commercial return (5–6 per cent) on capital tied up, possibly reluctantly, in house building.

When the north Derbyshire iron industry revived after the opening of the North Midland Railway in 1840, and the coal industry developed on a much larger scale, most of the bigger companies built houses and a few can be said to have developed whole communities. The work of George Stephenson & Co. at Clay Cross is the best-known example of this phase of development, together with the Barrow family at Staveley, who gave their name to Barrow Hill. Sheepbridge built rather fewer houses at their ironworks, possibly because it was close to Chesterfield, but did build villages near their collieries at Glapwell (Doe Lea) and Langwith (Whaley Thorns). Smaller companies built odd rows of cottages, rather than complete communities. Similarly, the Wingerworth Iron Company, which for a time operated blast furnaces on a scale comparable with those at Sheepbridge, Staveley and Clay Cross, do not seem to have built houses, relying on private enterprise to create the new suburb of Birdholme south of Chesterfield.

All the larger colliery companies continued to build as the coalfield expanded east in the late nineteenth century. Most of the new settlements were very close to the pits they served and consisted of bleak rows of terraced houses, typified by villages that have now disappeared such as Arkwright Town, which was isolated from any existing community, or Bond's Main, which was an extension of the older hamlet of Temple Normanton. Both the houses themselves and the layouts were clearly conceived to keep costs down and it is possible that the housing was not intended to last much longer than the expected life of the pit. Only the Bolsover Company embraced the 'garden village' ideal fashionable in the late nineteenth century, with their schemes at New Bolsover and Creswell Model Village of the 1890s. Both have been deemed worth conserving, despite being grossly atypical of the general run of housing on the coalfield, much of which has been demolished since the 1960s.

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The output of the North Derbyshire coalfield expanded considerably during the First World War and in 1918 the major companies assumed that this growth would continue. Several new pits were sunk, mainly by the complex interlocking directorate that controlled Staveley, Stanton and Sheepbridge (as well as several companies in the South Yorkshire coalfield). Realising that large numbers of new houses would be needed, suspicious of the ability of the rural district councils to build them, and conscious of the economies of scale that could be achieved by combining resources, the companies established the Industrial Housing Association. This was a public utility company, funded by the constituent companies through securitising future rent income, which was strikingly successful in building large numbers of houses in both the North Derbyshire and South Yorkshire coalfields in the early 1920s, as their own very interesting publication, *Ten Thousand New Houses*, demonstrated.

Espousing the design standards of the Ministry of Health Housing Manual as well as the subsidies available under the 1918 and later Housing Acts, the IHA's architects designed a network of large estates quite different from pre-war housing. Houses were grouped in short rows with a varied building line and gardens back and front. Most had bathrooms, if often placed downstairs, and w.c. lavatories, albeit reached from an exterior door. The streets were laid out on curves, using the hammerhead cul-de-sac and other devices to create variety, and architects took advantage of the often steeply sloping sites to create far more interesting layouts than the grid-plan terraces of the late nineteenth century. The dark red brickwork, with rather heavy detailing, and slate roofs of New Bolsover and Creswell was abandoned in favour of simple neo-vernacular elevations in a warmer, orangey brick, with tiled roofs. Roads were wider, there was reasonable public open space, and each estate had a group of shops at its centre.

Villages such as Hollingwood or Duckmanton, near Staveley, or Bramley Vale, near Glapwell, make a striking contrast with their neighbours at Barrow Hill and Doe Lea, and are an important element in the history of working-class housing in the coalfield. They are not dissimilar to contemporary Chesterfield RDC housing schemes (since both were partly funded by the Ministry of Health) but probably until at least 1925 the IHA was the larger provider of houses in the district. Ironically, all the colliery companies' housing stock, including that built by the IHA, was vested in the National Coal Board in 1947 and later transferred to the local authorities, who retain that which has not been demolished or sold to sitting tenants.

Philip concluded by pointing out that many of the ideas developed in the Derbyshire coalfield were transferred to the Dukeries coalfield in north Nottinghamshire in the later 1920s, since the new collieries there were almost all built by Derbyshire or South Yorkshire companies used to providing houses for their miners. In addition, the pits were sunk in a rural area, served by a district council that neither wanted the mines nor wanted to build large numbers of houses, nor did they have the technical expertise to do so, as the colliery companies recognised. It was against this background that Harworth, New Ollerton, Edwinstowe and the other mining villages of the Dukeries were built, forming the final phase of a story that begins at Golden Valley 150 years earlier.

The talk was followed by a lively discussion, to which Cliff Williams in particular made a useful contribution, drawing on his research on Clay Cross and adjoining communities. He pointed out that the Wingerworth Coal Company's activities at North Wingfield were on a sufficient scale to merit the description of 'community building', even if it was less extensive than that of Clay Cross Company.

Philip Riden

Chesterfield Tramway Depot – Unveiling the Commemorative Plaque by Andrew Milne

As a member of Transpire, the Chesterfield Bus Society, I was delighted to see slides in the NEDIAS Power Point presentation of the Tramway Depot on Chatsworth Road and the 75th anniversary commemorative plaque.

Many people will be familiar with the building at 172 Chatsworth Road as the workshop of the East Midland Electricity Board. Fredericks, the local ice cream manufacturer, now own the premises.

We can only imagine electric trams on the site. But four buses spanning the most recent four decades of public transport in Chesterfield travelled up Chatsworth Road for the unveiling ceremony. The oldest, the preserved PD2 in Chesterfield Corporation Transport livery showed its destination blind "BRAMPTON 225". 225 was (and

remains) the fleet number of the bus, but it would have frequently operated the route 22 to Brampton. The most modern vehicle in Stagecoach livery, displayed BRAMPTON 49, the nearest to a contemporary equivalent of the old route 22, although route 49 was being operated by much inferior vehicles.

It could have detracted from the occasion that the actual plaque had not arrived in time for the ceremony, but Transpire secretary Chris Conroy and Bruno Frederick happily posed for the cameras with a facsimile drawn from a paper bag. There was free ice cream for everyone, followed by the opportunity to go inside the old depot, and to climb a stepladder and photograph the roof.



Photo courtesy Patricia Pick

The evening continued with a ride on the buses up the old tram track of route 22 to position the buses beside the doomed Terminus Hotel. In the following weeks the hotel was demolished. As it disappeared, route revisions brought an end to short journeys to Brampton. Buses pass the new retirement flats on their way to Holymoorside, Baslow, Buxton and Manchester. But 76 years after it ceased to be a tramway terminus, Brampton is no longer a destination for regular service buses.

Andrew Milne

Robinson's "Model Village"

by Jacqueline Currell

Ed – The sequel to Darrell Clark's opus "Homes Fit for Worker" in NEDIAS Newsletter 10, May 2003

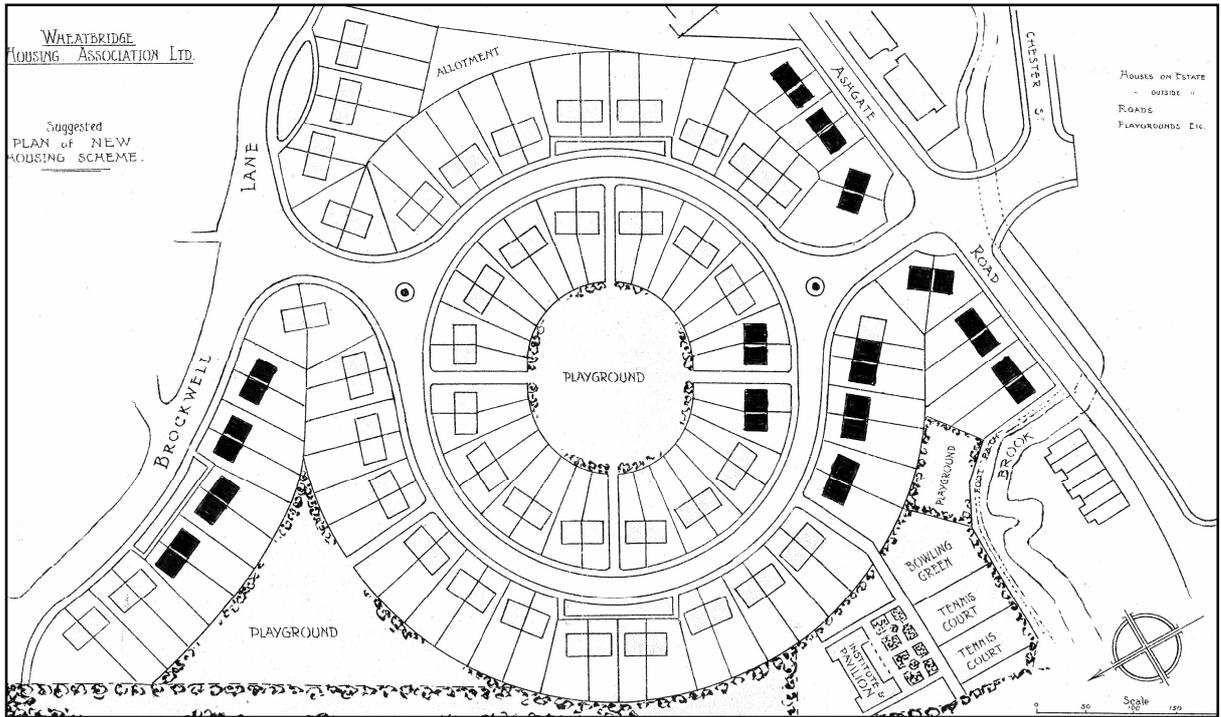
We are no nearer solving the mystery of the Robinson's "Model Village" houses that never got built – but have seen some fascinating histories of the ones that did, from relatives and friends of the original tenants. House deeds belonging to the present owners contain copies of the original indentures and conveyances from the Wheatbridge Housing Association in 1919, and a schedule with signatures of each tenant.

The plan below shows the 30 houses from the "First Schedule", on Ashgate Road (to the left on the plan), and the lower end of Holmebank West, and four pairs along Brockwell Lane (to the right on the plan).



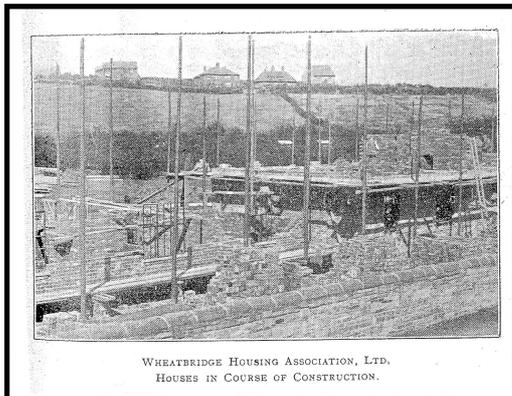
The houses on Brockwell Lane were built in 1920-1921, on the Dorman & Long steel-framed pattern. They overlooked the "Windmill" field, where gipsies had an encampment, their horses hobbled to stop them straying into the gardens. These houses were known as the "birdcages", because of their steel framing, and the original exteriors were of pebble dashed brickwork – the bricks presumably being in short supply. This eventually deteriorated, and was replaced by bricks – the tenants remaining in residence, protected by tarpaulins!

The contemporary photograph below shows construction underway. The houses followed the general pattern of having wide frontages – rather unusual at the time, and criticised by many – and an upstairs bathroom. They were gas-lit, and had Yorkshire ranges (from William Green on Whittington Moor), later to be replaced by fireplaces, put in by G.F.Kirks, builders, and chosen by the tenants, with an oven at the side. A back boiler supplied hot water, and there was a cylinder boiler for the washing. There was a coal store and a pantry, and the rent was 10 shillings per week.



The first tenants at No.5a – “Uplands”, were Harry and Mrs Fletcher – she had been a nurse at Robinsons – moving in in November 1921, just before their first child was born; Christine and her brother Stuart are now the only Robinsons tenants as all the houses were gradually sold. Next door lived Ada Churcher, her paraplegic son John, Nellie and Herbert and their two daughters.

Under construction



Many of the houses still have original features from the time they were built – wood panelling, doors and windows, the remains of the gas lighting pipes in the walls – and fireplaces with delightful local tiles and handsome oak surrounds, or small cast-iron versions upstairs. Pot sinks, storm doors and quarry tiles still exist here and there, even if now relegated to the gardens.

People have memories of the houses as they were years ago – of painting the outsides for Harrison & Fletcher, a firm employed by Robinsons, of houses “saved” for letting to prospective printers, who were in short supply at Robinsons, of the eccentric tenant who went shopping in her nightdress.... So, what happened to the other 80 houses that were planned? Why was the road joining the two groups of houses not made

up until after WW2? And, though the little playing field in the centre of the plan did exist, why did the tennis courts, bowling greens and pavilion never materialise? Was it simply lack of funds or shortage of building materials – or was it more profitable to sell the land to private developers at the time?

The Housing Association had such good intentions, and, indeed, the commitment to maintaining the existing houses and looking after the tenants for as long as they chose to stay. A completed “model village” would indeed have been a fine example of its kind, and an important part of Chesterfield’s landscape.

Jacqueline Currell

Letter to the editor

Dear Cliff,

I have been interested for a long time in the social and economic effects of the invention of the electric telegraph, so I appreciated David Wilmot's tailpiece to NEDIAS Newsletter No.11, the story from Sir Francis Head's "Stokers and Pokers" about the telegraph being used to intercept an eloping couple.

In 1845 the telegraph along the Great Western Railway between Slough and Paddington was used to track the movements of a murderer, John Tawell, and led to his arrest. The story is briefly told on page 51 of "The Victorian Internet" by Tom Standage (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1998). Chapter 8 of the same book is called "Love along the Wires". It mentions two weddings conducted by telegraph (in America of course), and a novel about telegraph courtship, "Wired Love: A Romance of Dots and Dashes" by Ella Cheever Thayer (1979).

Richard Blythe in "Danger Ahead: The Dramatic Story of Railway Signalling" (Newman Neame, 1951), tells (p.41) of a Norfolk courtship by a specially built private telegraph between the houses of the Rev. Benjamin Armstrong, vicar of East Dereham.

And Mark Twain went one better and wrote a story about a courtship and marriage by telephone: "The Lovers of Alonzo Fitzclarence and Rosannah Ethelton", in the collection "The Stolen White Elephant".

Yours sincerely

Derek Bayliss

Ed – No doubt the modern equivalents, to be described by future historians, are Internet Chat rooms, mobile texting, etc. What price romance!

IA News and Notes

ROBINSON'S WALTON WORKS SITE:

A report in the Derbyshire Times of 23 October outlined that a recent review of this site in readiness for the redevelopment had shown that some structures might be of national significance. Christopher Charlton and Dr Pat Strange of the Arkwright Society had visited the site by invitation during August. They believe the buildings are very important examples of early fireproofing. One 18th Century building has had its iron columns replaced with later ones, and it is very similar to buildings at Strutt's Milford that were destroyed in the 1980's. The other building on the site is a 19th Century building, is fire-proofed in what is known as the American Principle, using extra thick beams, and **it is suggested that this building is probably the only known survivor in the UK.**

During the visit concern was also expressed about the condition of Cannon Mill, which shows increasing deterioration, and pressure needs to be brought on those parties with responsibility for its future. **Darrell Clark**

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: More Light needed on Illuminating Companies

NEDIAS has been asked by Michael Williams of Nottingham to assist with his research into early electricity supplies in northeast Derbyshire. Michael is interested in early electricity works, mainly for the 19th century. Michael has obtained some information but has the following questions for us: -

Butterley Company - had its own generators, used only for lighting (source - *Butterley Brick, 200 Years in the Making*, by Roy Christian, p128) - **What was the voltage of the system and was it alternating or direct current?**

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Staveley Coal & Iron Co. Ltd - Company had its own generators, producing AC at 30 cycles per second - Was the voltage the same as Devonshire Works, producing 1,500KW DC and 25,500KW AC ? Finding reference to a “give and take” arrangement between Devonshire Works and Glapwell Colliery under Sheepbridge ownership also puzzles Michael.

Avenue Carbonisation Plant, Wingerworth, generated its own power, both AC and DC, at what voltages and by what means?.

Clay Cross Company - produced its own electricity, and supplied some parts of the town (*A Survey of Chesterfield Region*, by R C Edwards & F A Wells) - What was the voltage and was it AC or DC?

Would anyone able to offer more information, or having answers to the above questions.
Please contact - Michael G Williams, Two Oakfield Road, Wollaton, Nottingham NG8 2SQ.

NEDIAS Membership Renewal:

It's that time of the year! Please see enclosed with this Newsletter request for renewal of your subscription. (Please ignore if as a recent recruit, your membership commenced after September this year)

IS THERE A CONTRIBUTION FROM YOU FOR THE NEXT NEDIAS NEWSLETTER?

A short article or observation, which would be of interest to the membership? Maybe something for the letters column? Then please send to Cliff Lea, 15 Kelburn Avenue, Walton, Chesterfield S40 3DG (Tel; 01246 234212, email; c2clea@tiscali.co.uk).

Deadline: Contributions for the next newsletter before 25 January please.

And Finally ...

The excellent and lively talk on the subject of the construction, rescue archaeology and restoration of Cromford Canal by Hugh Potter was very well attended, and well received by an attentive audience. It reminded my grasshopper mind of another form of water transport in Derbyshire, which is recorded in the comprehensive publication about the characters of the Lunar Society by Jenny Uglow (*The Lunar Men*, Faber & Faber, 2002).

Later in his life Erasmus Darwin (who was the grandfather of Charles Darwin, and who even in his much earlier lifetime had radical views about evolution which influenced his grandson) moved to the Ashbourne area, with a house backing onto the river. At the end of his garden he constructed in the late 1780's a wire drawn and somewhat complex ferry to enable him to take his visitors across the river. Visitors at that time included other famous “Lunatics” such as Matthew Boulton and Josiah Wedgwood.

It is interesting that the Lunar Society members made very regular trips into the Peak District, collecting minerals, seeking sources of metals, and studying not only the geology but flora and fauna. This small group of people became influential, inventive and resourceful in their own ways; Derbyshire clearly had great influence on their lives.

CWL

Your NEDIAS Committee: - *Chairman* – David Wilmot; *Secretary* – Patricia Pick; *Treasurer* – Pamela Alton. *Membership Secretary/Assistant Treasurer* – Jean Heathcote; *Publicity & Newsletter* – Cliff Lea; *Lecture Meetings Organiser* – Malcolm Fisher; *Archivist* --Pete Wilson; *Committee Members* – David Hart, David Rance, Paul Smith, Jack Smith

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