

North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society

NEDIAS Newsletter No. 17 – February 2005

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Chairman's Comments:

Four years ago this month, on 20th February 2001, we held our inaugural meeting life; has not been the same since! The last three months have been even more busy than usual. Talks by Cliff Williams on the Clay Cross Company and its paternalism, Peter Machen on the Sheffield Flood and Catherine Wilson on the history and development of Lincolnshire's windmills have all been very well attended to the point of testing the room capacity of the Friends Meeting House. New premises for 2005/06 are, in consequence, being identified and their suitability now being considered.

We have been busy in other areas too. In January we hosted a meeting to examine the possibilities for conservation and re-use of Cannon Mill. This followed a site visit arranged by Richard Robinson which, in turn, sparked off a visit to Robinson's Walton site to look at the 1820s 'fire resistant' cotton mill and its associated buildings.

In considering the continuing loss of former industrial buildings, usually these days for new housing developments, NEDIAS has asked Chesterfield Borough Council as well as North East Derbyshire and Bolsover District Councils whether we might be advised of planning applications received on such sites. Our concern is not to interfere with the due process of arranging professional archaeological surveys of major sites believed to have highly important historic value, but to try to record the evidence of the industrial activities which took place on the sites from the surface and structural remains. Various replies have been received; suffice to say that the process is now in hand and Stuart Kay has very kindly agreed to lead the deliberations.

Two other interesting developments are worthy of mention. Firstly, NEDIAS has been asked by Derbyshire Archaeological Society to host one day of the annual conference of the Association for

Industrial Archaeology to be held in Derbyshire in September. Site visits are currently being arranged by NEDIAS for about half of those attending the conference who opt to see north east Derbyshire. Secondly, NEDIAS has been invited to take part in discussions on the formation of a trust body for Summerley Coke Ovens, with the first meeting to be held in early March (*See further details later on page 7*).

On top of all this, we still have our Annual General Meeting on 14th March, two further lecture meetings after that and the Members' summer visits are also being arranged. For anyone lost for something to read on those nights when not engaged on NEDIAS activities, Cliff Lea has arranged publication of a bound volume of our first twelve Newsletters. So, all in all, you can see life with NEDIAS has got even busier in the last four years. And, guess what! Our need for more members to assist in the running of NEDIAS is even greater than ever! Whether by committee members or by helpers, each contribution of just a little time to NEDIAS will make life easier all round and help to ensure we meet not only our own hopes and aspirations but also the increasing expectations of others.

Apart from the more obviously defined roles, such as 'chairman', we need people to look after the website (*Ed: - see my plea later on page 8*), arrange for lecture meeting speakers, outside visits and site surveys, looking at planning applications, assisting the editor with production of publicity material, newsletters, journals and other publications, as well as looking after the speaker and visitors at our meetings. The AGM gives the chance not only to reflect on the past year but also to consider what we can each do to secure the Society's future. So here's hoping I will be able to welcome a record number of members to our 4th AGM on 14 March?

David Wilmot

WHAT'S ON?

NEDIAS Lecture Programme, 2004/2005

When: Meetings are usually held the second Monday of each month, starting at 7.30 pm.
Where: The Friends Meeting House, Ashgate Road, Chesterfield (junction of Brockwell Lane).

- 14 March 2005** **AGM & Members' Evening:** – *Philip Cousins will talk about the railway contractor John Knowles and his company, the Wooden Box Co. Patricia Pick has also offered to show some slides from 2004 and the short video of Pleasley's Lilleshall/Markham engine in motion, driven by an electric motor (ex-forklift truck, with rubber-tyre drive to winding drum) will also be shown.*
- 11 April 2005** **Martin Sanderson:** *A History of the Bryan Donkin Group*
- 9 May 2005** **Ann Hodson:** *The Derwent Dams & Birchinlee Village*

What else is on?

Thursday 17 March 2005: “Damstead Works, Dronfield”, by David Rance. Results of the survey and excavation at Damstead Works carried out by NEDIAS members. Old Dronfield Society meeting, information from ODS on 01246 415763, or from David Rance on 01142 363719.

Monday 21 March 2005: “Signalling” by John Foreman, Peak Rail Society, 8.00pm at Alexandra Hotel, Derby.

Friday 15 April 2005: “Restoration of Arkwright’s Cromford Mill” Darrell Clark will be giving an illustrated lecture at Chesterfield Library, at 10.00 to 11.30. Tickets from Chesterfield Library or at the door.

Monday 16 May 2005: Grinding and Tilting at Wisewood Forge, Loxley, Sheffield. Presentation by Richard O’Neill, with details of recent excavations. SYIH lecture at Kelham Island, starts 7.30 pm.

Saturday 21 May 2005: “Industries of Worksop” East Midlands Industrial Archaeology Conference, is to be held on Saturday 21 May 2005 at St Annes Church Hall, Worksop. For further information contact Tom Farnsworth on 01332 703883.

Tuesday 12 July 2005: “Leathermaking & Clayton’s Tannery” by Barry Knight at Chesterfield Civic Society meeting, 7.30, Eyre Chapel, Newbold.

NEDIAS Membership Renewal was due 1 January 2005

A gentle reminder to those who have not yet renewed their membership.....

Cannon Mill and Walton ‘Bump’ Mill

by David Wilmot

Richard Robinson’s concerns for the future of the Cannon Mill Building were brought to the fore during a discussion hosted by NEDIAS at the Friends Meeting House on 17th January. This followed a Saturday morning viewing of the building by more than twenty interested individuals. The outcome of the meeting was that the Cannon Mill building, although having been given Grade II Listed status was short on tangible evidence of its original usage. While plans showed it as part of the Griffin Foundry area, its actual purpose was less than clear. Furnaces were known to have existed nearby and it was felt that the provenance of the remaining structure might be helped if exploratory borings or digs could be carried out by professional archaeologists to establish the proximity of the furnace bases.



Fig. 1: The “Cannon” Mill (Photo: Pete Wilson)

Such findings might improve the prospects of the heritage aspects of the site being incorporated in to redevelopment plans for the Cannon Mill building, much of which would depend upon a commercially viable use being identified beforehand.

The complex of buildings at the western end of the Brampton industrial swathe presented a different proposition. While many of the original factory buildings on the site, such as Plowright's engineering firm, had been razed and replaced by Robinson's late 19th, early 20th century buildings, the site had mostly been cleared down to concrete floorings and tarmac yards. What remained was a range of buildings part of which included an early 19th century 'fire-resistant' cotton mill and, possibly the engine house for a substantial steam powered beam engine of similar vintage, both recently endowed with Grade II* listed status as of national rather than just local importance. The 17th January meeting was told that this would be a more suitable prospect for use as a museum of Chesterfield and Brampton's industrial past.

The outcome was a site visit to the cotton mill complex led by Richard Robinson, and by courtesy of the Robinson Group. Around twenty people attended, seeing first the long, three-storey building previously used as carding rooms. Cast iron columns supporting the floor above divided the ground floor, with some very heavy castings used to join the joists and support the long-gone line shafting.

Joining the long carding building to the 1820 cotton mill was a narrow structure housing two industrial lifts. Access to the upper floors of the cotton mill was gained by a narrow staircase typical of the early factory era. Once more, we had a profusion of cast iron columns but this time supporting the brick arches of the roof. Adjoining the cotton mill was a tall, narrow building with very thick outer walls. One



wall had a recess forming an arc, visible on each of the current four floors, which appeared to be a space made to accommodate a steam engine's flywheel of around twenty five feet diameter. If the modern, steel-girder supported intermediate floors could be removed, it would be possible to see the full extent of the space allocated to the steam engine once in pride of place. Further excavation would doubtless reveal the sub-floor in which the steam condenser and pump would have been installed.

Fig. 2: Walton Mill (Photo: Richard Robinson)

Modern buildings to the west of the cotton mill mask the view and their removal could be beneficial. The river Hipper flows along the north side of the site but there was no sign of either the original waterwheel said to have been at the other end of the cotton mill or its water courses. The general view of those present was that here Chesterfield had a splendid opportunity to display an important part of its industrial heritage, both in terms of the buildings and prospective museum displays.

The downside was the enormity of the task and consequent heavy funding requirement. Much depends upon the willingness of the current owners and the future developer of the site to support a use, which, whether as a community facility or heritage/museum project, would be a real challenge to make economically viable. The redevelopment of the very long site between Cannon Mill and Walton Mill will need careful planning if any vestige of its industrial past is to be retained. It seems that Chesterfield Borough Council is already well aware of this need so it is to be hoped that ways will be found to incorporate public access to both mill buildings in the development plans, as well as a means of funding for their secure future. Conversion of the whole to residential accommodation might be attractive financially but would deprive us of one of Chesterfield's strongest links with its industrial past. We can but await developments with keen interest and bated breath.

Peak Railway

Nigel Carabine

Ed: In October 2004, Nigel Carabine gave a detailed presentation on the history and future prospects of the line, which we now know as Peak Rail. Nigel has provided the following supplementary information. A visit or social event with Peak Rail could be a welcome addition to our visits programme for later this year following the most successful visit to Butterley last year. Reserve a seat for me!

The Manchester, Buxton, Matlock and Midland Junction Railway opened the line from Ambergate to Rowsley in 1849 with the aim of linking Derby to Manchester, but did not progress beyond there. The Midland Railway saw the potential of the line and extended from Rowsley to Buxton, starting passenger services in 1863. The MR further extended from Millers Dales and reached Manchester in 1867; it also took control of the Ambergate-Rowsley section in 1871.

The line is one of the most spectacular examples of Victorian railway construction in England, running through the rugged limestone country and requiring much heavy engineering. In the 20 miles between Matlock and Buxton, there are 10 tunnels totalling 3,645 yards (just over two miles), many bridges and viaducts, the largest being the 100ft high, five arch structure at Monsal Dale, and the ruling gradient from Rowsley to Buxton is 1 in 100. In contrast with this engineering grandeur, the MR claimed to have the smallest station in the country at Blackwell Mill, a one-coach length platform serving the railwaymen's cottages in the centre of Millers Dale junction. (The grandeur of the Millers Dale viaduct can be seen in the attached picture; visitors this year to Monsal Head can once again see its full majesty, now that the trees and shrubs previously part-masking the view have been cleared over the winter.)



Monsal Viaduct. (J.W.Jackson, 1930's)

In more recent times, improved road transport, greater car ownership, and the electrification of the west Coast Main Line from Euston to Crewe reduced the importance of the MR line to Manchester. Hassop station closed as early as 1942, passenger traffic ceased in 1967 and the line closed in 1968. The track between Matlock and Blackwell Mill was removed soon afterwards. The Peak Park Planning Board acquired the track bed within the National Park, and in the 1970's created the Monsal Trail over part of it; local authorities took over the track bed to the south of the Park boundary.

In 2003 Derbyshire County Council along with the Peak District National Park Authority and other interested bodies asked consultants Scott Wilson to undertake an independent feasibility study to see whether a rail route can be re-opened between Buxton/ Chinley and be part of the National Rail Network.

The Peak Railway Society was formed following a meeting of visionary railway enthusiasts in a Matlock pub in 1975. The PRS was the result, and established a Steam Centre on the site of the former Buxton Midland station, operating shuttle services along 300 yards of track between 1984 and 1987. This put Peak Rail's name on the map, but it was 1988 before the planning authorities were finally convinced that the scheme to re-open the line was credible.

Only then could the massive task of clearing 20 years of dereliction between Darley Dale and Matlock begin, reclaiming the track bed from undergrowth, repairing bridges (particularly that over the River Derwent near Matlock), and installing a level crossing at Darley Dale. An enormous effort by the dedicated team of volunteers and small number of full-time staff was required, to rebuild the Railway to the requirements of the Railway Inspectorate for running public services, with the station building at Darley Dale converted into a shop and buffet and new toilet block built.

The reward for all this work was the first public train at the end of 1991, a push-pull service from Darley Dale over a mile of track towards Matlock. A temporary platform, Matlock Riverside, was built just south of the River Derwent and full operation over the two miles from Darley Dale was formally inaugurated by the Duke of Devonshire in May 1992. During 1996, the final stages of the extension to Rowsley South were completed. Development at Rowsley continues apace, with construction of an engine shed and the rebuilding of the old turntable. In 2000 Peak Rail played host to the world famous loco "The Flying Scotsman", the 9-day event proving a tremendous success, attracting over 20,000 visitors.

Letters

Ed: One of our guests to Peter Machen's talk on the Sheffield Flood, Jack Smith (not to be confused with committee member Jack Smith of Newbold) was born in the Hillsbrough area, to descendants of survivors of the flood. Jack has sent to me the following correspondence. This talk, and Jack's comments, come at a time when hundreds of lives are reported lost only in mid-February this year at the most recent and clearly just as catastrophic dam failure in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan. Have we learnt nothing, and will the compensation paid be as bizarre as that outlined below?

Dear Mr Lea,

My wife and I thoroughly enjoyed the talk on 10 January given by Peter Machen. I have particular interest in the Sheffield Flood because my paternal grandmother was born in the affected area on the very day of the flood. She and her mother were taken into upstairs rooms at Hillsborough Palace.

I was born in 1927 in the Hillsborough district less than a mile away from the River Don, and my grandmother lived just 3 doors away. I must have mixed with some descendants of the flood although very little was talked about it 70 years ago compared to today. But I very often travelled up the Loxley valley particularly around the Damflask area and tried to imagine what took place on that fateful night.

Many of the people living along the path of the flood would be large families living in poorly built homes. Many of the people concerned were poor and illiterate, and when it came to claims for compensation there appear to have been some strange decisions. For instance the commission awarded almost £500 for the loss of rare editions of the Bible and other books, whereas a young 7 year old cripple who lost his mother, father and young brother, was only awarded £100. A couple who claimed £350 for the loss of three children were only awarded £25, because children under earning age were not eligible for compensation, and it was not unusual for children even of 12 or 13 to earn just a few shillings per week.

As a descendant of one of the survivors, I do wonder about the conditions, which the working classes endured in those days, and we must all consider ourselves very lucky.

I wish you and the NEDIAS society every success in the future and hope that I'll be able to come to one or two future talks.

Yours sincerely
Jack Smith,
54 Denbank Drive, S10 5PG

IA News and Notes

Clay Mills Pumping Engines, Burton upon Trent

Two of the four large beam engines (Gimson, Leicester, 1885) will be on steam at Clay Mills during Easter weekend, 27th and 28th March.

Summerley Coke Ovens at Unstone, Update

NEDIAS has been invited to take part in discussions on the formation of a trust body for Summerley Coke Ovens, with the first meeting to be held in early March. English Heritage and DCC have already been clearing some of the area, and have stabilized a bank at the site.

East Midland Industrial Archaeology Conference

The next EMIAC conference, titled "**Industries of Workso**p", is to be held on Saturday 21 May 2005. For further information contact Tom Farnsworth on 01332 703883.

NEDIAS Newsletter – bound copy of the very first Issues 1 – 12, our first 3 years

NEDIAS have published a complete, indexed and **fully bound** set of the first 12 editions of the NEDIAS Newsletter. Copies are now available for purchase, and those who have already placed an order may pick up their copy at the AGM. The cost is £5 for members (£7 for non-members).

With the growing popularity of NEDIAS, this will become a collector's item!

Activity at Pleasley

Open weekend 10th & 11th September 2005 but visitors very welcome when volunteers are working on site, usually Thursdays, 10 am to 1pm and Sundays, 10am to 3pm (further details – ring 01623 810414). Trials are in hand with electric drive and it is hoped to have the Lilleshall/Markham engine in motion in the near future.

Information Required

The editor is seeking information on one “John Taylor the Younger” who was commercially active in Chesterfield in 1812, involved in scaling up manufacture of candles by a new process, but no doubt involved in other activities. All information welcome on a John Taylor in the area at the time. Either E-mail me at c2clea@tiscali.co.uk, or see my address at the end of this Newsletter.

NEDIAS Web Site

I started our web site, and registered our domain name, with the assistance of my son, some years ago, but I don't have the time nor the skills needed to move it forwards. Do we have a member who is skilled in this direction and would be interested to take it on, and particularly to register us into the “Archaeology Web Ring” ? Is there a webmaster in the house? Please contact Cliff Lea

And Finally

Dr Catherine Wilson gave an excellent presentation this month on the history and development of Lincolnshire windmills. Whilst there are few remaining windmills in Derbyshire, one of Derbyshire's famous sons does have an interesting and devastating connexion with the subject.

James Brindley who hails from Wormhill is best known as one of the greats of the English canals, and was of course involved until his death on survey and construction of the Chesterfield Canal. But in earlier life he learned his trade as a millwright, working principally in Staffordshire, and working with both wind and water power. His workshop was actually rented from Josiah Wedgwood's uncle.

Those who heard Dr Wilson's lecture will recall the descriptions of the complex variable shuttering mechanisms on the sails of windmills, so constructed that strong wind could pass through without causing damage to the structure, and clearly a technology vital to the integrity of the windmill.

In Harold Bode's biography of Brindley, it's reported that Brindley was involved in his earlier days in constructing a windmill for Wedgwood, the purpose of which was to grind flint.

Unfortunately, it's also reported that the sails blew off on the very first day!

Thankfully for the English canal system, this was NOT the end of Brindley's career.

Cliff Lea

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

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