

**North East Derbyshire  
Industrial Archaeology Society**  
NEDIAS Newsletter No. 37 – February 2010

Price: £1.00 (Free to Members)



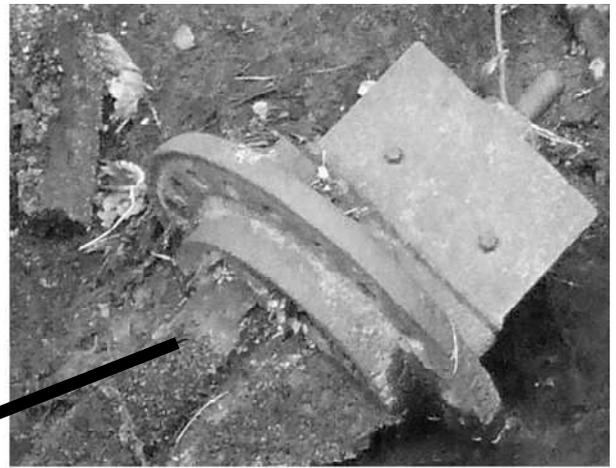
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**Disappearing landmarks:**

**B**arry Richardson has supplied photographs of relics still surviving from the Brampton Branch crossing next to the shop at Park Road, Chesterfield, and across the road from Queens Park. Various items are still visible, but presumably will disappear finally when the public right of way is created.





If you have good examples of “before” and “after” photos, why not pass them to the editor for recording in a future NEDIAS Newsletter.

## WHAT'S ON?

### NEDIAS Lecture Programme, 2010

Venue: Friends' Meeting House, Ashgate Road, Chesterfield @ 7:30pm

8 February 2010	Raye Battye: <i>“Gannister Mining in the Sheffield Area”</i>
8 Mar 2010	AGM & Patrick Morriss: <i>“The Uniqueness of the Cromford Canal”</i>
12 Apr 2010	Suzanne Bingham: <i>“The Role of the Workhouse in Society”</i>
10 May 2010	DAVID WILMOT MEMORIAL LECTURE Tom Ingall: <i>“The Great Central Railway”</i>
13 Sept 2010	Tony Hallam: <i>“The Family Markham”</i>

## Other Diary Dates

15 February 2010	Alan Hardman: <i>Dannemora and more: exploring the history of Swedish iron and steel.</i> SYIHS lecture 7:30 pm. Kelham Island Museum, Sheffield.
20 February 2010	Derek Bayliss: <i>“Wortley Top Forge and early Ironmaking in South Yorkshire.”</i> SYIHS/ Rotherham History Society lecture, 10:30am. Rotherham Central Library
26 February 2010	Dr Trevor Brighton: <i>“Ashford’s Marble Industry.”</i> DAS, St Mary’s Church Hall, Darley Lane, Derby at 7:30pm.
22 March 2010	David Hey: <i>“Penistone: from market town to industrial town.”</i> SYIHS lecture, 7:00pm. Cooper Gallery, Church Street, Barnsley
23 March 2010	Dr. James Symonds: <i>Uncovering Sheffield’s metallurgical past. The nineteenth Dr. Kenneth Barraclough Memorial Lecture. Joint Meeting with the SMEA.</i> 5:30pm for 6:00pm at the Holiday Inn, Royal Victoria Hotel.
25 March 2010	Philip Riden: <i>“Tapton – review following research by the VCH”.</i> Brimington & Tapton LHS, 7:30pm, St Michael’s Church Hall, Brimington
27 May 2010	Stephen Gay: <i>“Woodhead: the lost railway”.</i> Brimington & Tapton LHS, 7:30pm, St Michael’s Church Hall, Brimington

## NEDIAS Visits Programme

**D**uring 2009 we had very successful visits to Goole Waterways Museum and to Clay Mills during a “steaming” open day.

This year we will visit Papplewick Pumping Station on a “steaming” day on Sunday 2nd May at 10:45am. Papplewick one of Britain’s finest Victorian Water Works and the only one in the Midlands to be preserved as a complete working water pumping station. Papplewick Pumping Station was built between 1882 - 1884 to supplement the water supply for the growing city of Nottingham. In the main building there are two massive beam pumping engines, thought to be the last built by James Watt & Co. These two 140hp engines lifted water from the 200 foot deep well, dug into the sandstone sub ground and pumped the water into the reservoir that supplied Nottingham. These beam engines worked for 85 years and ceased regular operation in 1969, when electric pumps were fitted in the pilot well near the main gate.

We hope also to plan visits to the Sheffield Assay Office, to Davy Markham at Darnall, and Kelham Island.

If you have any additional requests and suggestions we’d be happy to see what else can be organised.

Further details to follow.



**K**nitting is a complicated process when compared to weaving and so, although machines that could weave, i.e. looms, have been around since ancient times, a machine which could knit took much longer to come about. Even hand knitting, apparently known to the ancient Egyptians, did not come to Britain until the 15th century. At first it was caps, petticoats and shawls which were knitted. Knitted hose came into fashion when men's fashions changed in Tudor Times so that men were showing off their legs! Queen Elizabeth is said to have been presented with her first pair of hand knitted silk stockings in 1560 and apparently declared that she would have no more "cloth hose". However, that pair of stocking apparently took two years to make so there was obviously a need for a machine which would speed up the process.

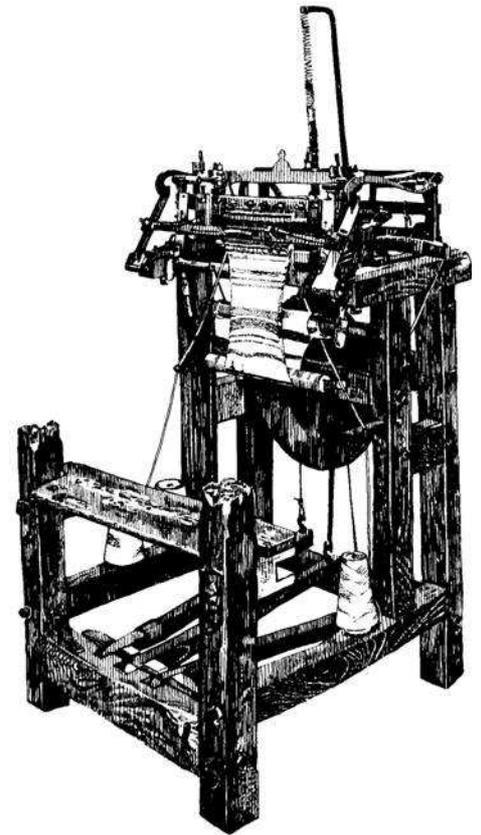
This is where the Reverend William Lee enters the story. He is credited with inventing the stocking frame in Calverton, Nottinghamshire in 1589. This first machine could only produce fairly coarse material and could not knit silk and when Lee applied to Elizabeth 1 for a patent he was refused. The traditional story is that she told him to come back when his machine could knit fine silk hose but the truth is more likely to have been that she did not want to encourage a machine which would threaten the livelihood of the hand knitters, an important industry in England at that time.

Having failed to win recognition here, Lee moved to France in about 1608 taking his brother James, his workmen and his frames with him. They established themselves in Rouen but after William's death in about 1614, James brought the workers and the frames back to England. They established themselves in London close to the best markets for expensive, highly fashionable hose but they kept in touch with Nottinghamshire. The industry grew slowly at first but in 1657 and again in 1663 The Framework Knitters Company was incorporated. This Livery Company or Guild attempted to control the trade by making regulations governing apprentices and the quality of product. Some manufacturers found this too much of a restriction and began to leave London for the East Midlands. During the following decade, the industry expanded in the East Midlands until by 1782 nearly 90% of the frames in use in the country were to be found in the East Midlands.

By this time there was a growing demand from less wealthy members of the population for cheaper hose made out of wool and later cotton, rather than silk. Cotton only became popular after Arkwright's innovations made it a cheaper yarn. Before that, some cheaper hose was made of linen thread, especially in Leicester. But Leicestershire, with its fine worsted wool was a natural place for the knitting of woollen stockings to be established. Nottinghamshire, with its growing cotton spinning industry came to specialise in cotton hose; Derby with the first water-powered textile mill in Great Britain which produced silk specialised in silk hose although there was some overlap between the three counties.

Various adaptations were made to the stocking frame over the years to enable it to make other garments and stitches. One adaptation allowed an open lacy fabric to be produced which resembled lace. Simulated lace produced on knitting frames eventually led to the invention of a machine which could produce real lace and the machine-made lace industry became established in Nottingham. Wide frames which could knit several garments at once were also built. These wide frames could also produce wide pieces of cloth from which stockings could be cut out. These stockings were of inferior quality to the fully fashioned hose and were referred to by some knitters as "cut ups" or "shoddy goods".

At first the knitters set up the frames in their own homes, adapting an existing room to become a workshop. Some people built workshops in their gardens and a number of these still exist, now mostly used as garden sheds. By the beginning of the 19th century, larger workshops were beginning to appear and a good example at Ruddington has now become the Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum.



The knitters were not employees but because of the way the industry was organised they were not exactly free men either. Knitters obtained their orders and raw materials from a Master Hosier and at the end of each week they sent their finished work back to him for marketing and collected their pay. Many knitters worked in small villages throughout Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and to take their work in to town themselves each week would take up a lot of valuable work time. Therefore, a group of middle men grew up who performed this task for them and extracted their cut of the proceeds. By the beginning of the 19th century, knitting frames had become very cheap to buy and many middle men began buying up machines. Even people who were not connected with the trade bought frames because they could hire them out to the knitters who had to pay frame rent every week regardless of whether they had had any work or not. One might ask why the knitters didn't buy their own frames. Some did but when work was in short supply, the middle men would only give orders out to their own frames. When times got hard, even knitters who owned their own frames were paying frame rent to the middle men just to get work.

The last years of the 18th century and the first decade of the 19th century were some of the most prosperous for the industry but after 1810 it started to enter depression and steep decline. There were various reasons for this but one was yet another change in men's fashions. Trousers came in and have never been out since. Now that their legs were not on show, men no longer needed to pay for expensive high fashion hose.

Times became very hard for the knitters and yet the number of frames was still expanding. This was because the frame owners were guaranteed an income from frame rent regardless of the state of the trade. Now that many knitters were working in larger workshops away from their homes they had to pay someone to do their winding and seaming. This had previously been done by their families for free. They also had to pay for light, heat and needles and there were deductions for faulty work. In some workshops the knitters even had to rent the space the frame stood on. Some knitters rented their own floors in their own homes so desperate were they to curry favour with the middle men who controlled the available work.

In 1811 groups of knitters, led by the legendary Ned Ludd began to break into workshops and smash the wide frames which they blamed for their declining fortunes. Luddism was quickly stamped out by the authorities but the suffering of the knitters continued. In 1842 strikes and riots broke out again but nothing improved for the knitters. In 1843, 25,000 knitters petitioned Parliament for an enquiry and this was granted. It resulted in The Report on the Condition of the Framework Knitters published in 1845. The Report recommended the following:

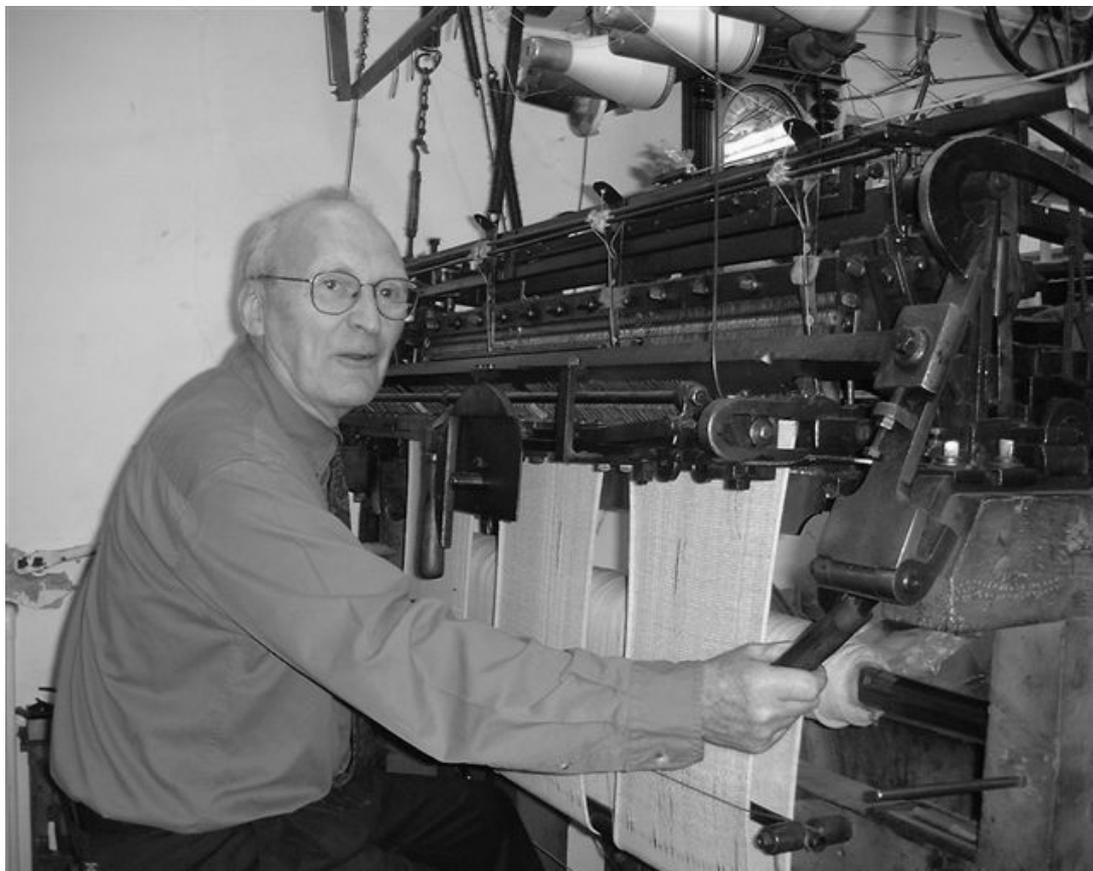
- reduce the number of workers;
- improve the quality of goods;
- organise the trade into a factory system.

There were no suggestions as to how any of this could be carried out. The knitting frame was not power operated and the knitting industry was one of the last to be properly industrialised i.e. organised into large factories. Just as it had been difficult to invent a machine that could knit in the first place, it was equally difficult to produce a powered knitting machine. An early factory was opened in 1845 by Thomas Collins but the real breakthrough came in 1864 with William Cotton's patent. This machine was capable of automatically widening and narrowing the knitted fabric to produce fully fashioned hose. Now the way was open for the hosiery industry to enter the factory stage and most of the framework knitting workshops closed down.

Most knitters either found work in the new factories or moved to other occupations but some clung on, making specialised products for niche markets. Some were employed in the hosiery factories to do specialised jobs which could only be done on a frame. The Framework Knitters Museum in Wigston, Leicester, is a real workshop which operated into the 20th century. G. H. Hurt & Sons is a family run knitwear company in Chilwell, Nottingham. They use modern knitting machines but they are keenly aware of their heritage and still keep some stocking frames in working order. The proprietor knows how to operate a frame and is willing to demonstrate for visitors but these old machines are no longer in regular use.

However, some of their products do bear this label:

*Knitted in Chilwell, Nottingham, England by a frame shop still using hand knitting frames between 200 and 300 years old that were originally invented by the Rev. William Lee of Nottinghamshire in 1589, an industry spanning almost 400 years.*



Mr Henry Hurt at the knitting frame.

NOTE: Visitors to Belper North Mill can see examples of early framework knitting machines occasionally demonstrated to the public.

## The Archaeology of the Mill

The November 2009 edition of *Industrial Archaeology Review* is a special issue which looks at the technology of the mill – which it describes as a machine for processing raw materials into usable products, whether food stuffs or anything else. It contains four articles with a time-span stretching forward from the 6th century AD. It covers the archaeological evidence for the earliest corn water mills in the grain rich landscapes of medieval Ireland, the late 20th technologically advanced paper mills at Guardbridge in Scotland, the technologically conservative sawing mill of a small Welsh slate quarry, and also covering John Smeaton's 18th century snuff mill at Chimney Mills, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Colin Rynne's article on Irish mill sites demonstrates that conscious decisions on the location of mills employing various types of fresh and estuarine water supplies were already being made by the early decades of the 7th century. Furthermore, not only were increasingly more challenging locations being adapted for use by early medieval millwrights, but the availability of water power had already become an important factor in the choice of sites for larger monasteries.

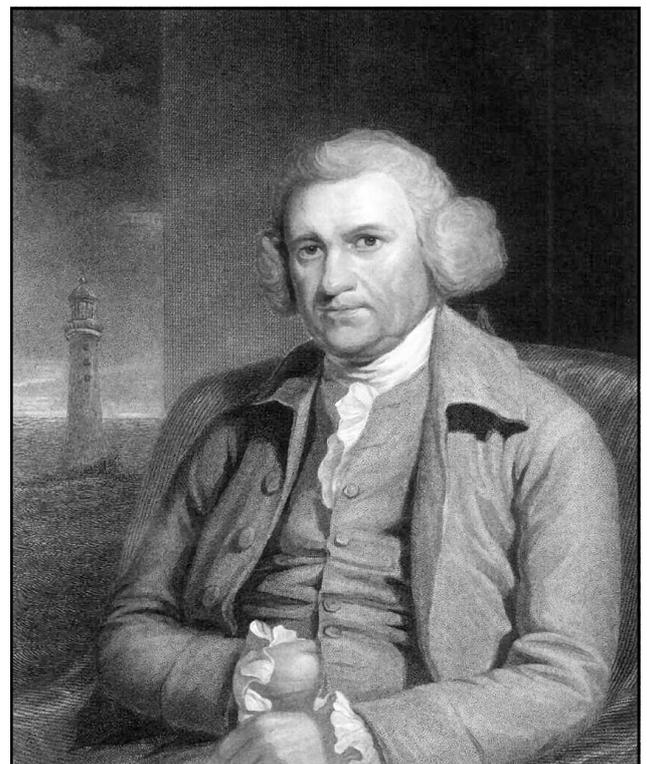
Baglee and Nolan's article describes excavations and findings at Leazes Brewery site in Newcastle prior to redevelopment, and where Smeaton had previously developed a mill for snuff. John Smeaton (1724-1792) is of national significance as a designer of wind and water powered industrial machinery and buildings, and he was amongst the first to describe himself as a "civil engineer" and as a "professional".

Smeaton is regarded today as the "father of civil engineering", having coined the term in 1768. He was elected to the Royal Society in 1753, connected to the Lunar Society and founded the Society of Civil Engineers in 1771. He designed the (third) Eddystone Lighthouse, and in the period 1753-1791 he designed 63 mills, of which 50 were water mills. These provided power for everything from colliery winding engines to production of flour, but his "Chimney Mills" at Newcastle was the only one designed for the grinding of snuff. He was also involved with steam power, improving Newcomen's atmospheric steam engine, particularly for collieries in the north-east and mines in Cornwall. Smeaton had strong Derbyshire connections, William Jessop was one of his pupils, and he worked with Brindley on canals. The authors mention that significance of the snuff mill excavation is twofold: this is known to be the only snuff mill designed by Smeaton, and it is also the only 18th century snuff mill recorded in the north-east England area.

An article by Malaws & McDonald is interesting in that it records the equipment and operations in the Guardbridge paper mill on the River Eden in Fife, both before it closed down and permitting survey and recording of Fourdrinier and other equipment and processes which had been in use since the 1870s, and after closure for more accurate recording of the equipment. The authors followed the process and associated equipments from original pulping of the wood, refining and blending, pumping to the Fourdrinier meshes, pressing, drying, winding, cutting and finishing.

Finally, there is a gem of an article by Jones & Longley. A 19th century slate sawing machine which had previously been in use at the now disused Twl Coed slate quarry in Gwynedd, had been added to the collection at the Welsh Slate Museum in Llanberis. This allowed the opportunity to record the machine in situ, and to carry out a photographic record of the mill building in which it was situated. The team showed this mid-Victorian Greaves equipment continued to closure, having been returned to use after more highly mechanised processes had outlived their day!

Clearly there was life in the old dog still, and the authors state that industries in their decadence often need to revert to older forms of technology, since these can offer a more effective technical solution than more modern machinery. Sounds familiar!



John Smeaton; 8th June 1724 - 28th October 1792

## Derbyshire Archaeology Day, Sat 16 January 2010

This year's Derbyshire Archaeology Day was a complete sell out. For the first time, the Pomegranate had more history and archaeology buffs than theatregoers for the Panto! Even the circle wings were packed out. And no wonder – there were some fascinating papers presented.

Longstone Local History Group recounted an excavation at Fin Cop, the ancient hill top fort above the hillside lead mine workings at Fin Wood, and overlooking Monsal Dale near the magnificent Monsal Head Viaduct. They found large numbers of chert chippings and artefacts dating to the Mesolithic period between 12,000 – 8,000 years ago. The most surprising result of the three week dig was the discovery of a human skeleton within the hill-fort defensive ditch, the skeleton dated to 300 – 200 BC. Over 200 sherds of pottery were located, contemporary with the fort, and within the window 1000 BC – 42 AD. This work showed the benefit of effective collaboration: the Longstone group enlisted participation from local schools and youth groups.

Daryl Garton's presentation was on surveys carried out on the high peat moors between Glossop and Saddleworth, and looking particularly for evidence of civilisation revealed as the peat moors gradually erode away due to weathering and drainage. He found many small Mesolithic arrow heads and small microchips of stone tools, in positions where erosion of peat from the shallow slopes at the high edges of the moor is starting to reveal the underlying structures. His findings date back 10,000 years, and I must say, I will look twice at the ground for microliths next time I'm at the edges of peat moors!

Richard O'Neil of ARCUS/ Wessex Archaeology gave details of an excavation at the site of the former engine house originally built for the Cromford Incline of the Cromford and High Peak Railway. This incline, which is situated just above the High Peak Junction, was originally served by a separate engine house and tackle similar to that at Sheep pasture. It was later incorporated into the Sheep Pasture Incline, and eventually worked as one using the Sheep Pasture tackle.

John Barnatt, senior survey archaeologist for the Peak District National Park Authority rapidly covered a massive amount of material which is contained in his latest book, *The Archaeology of a Great Estate: Chatsworth and Beyond* published in September by Windgather Press. He and Nicola Bannister surveyed more than 12,000 acres of parkland, woods, farms, moors and historic buildings before writing their book, and he revealed previously unrecognised prehistoric burial mounds and farming remains, and a wealth of detail on past estate landscaping, farming, industry and roads throughout the Chatsworth landscape. It was perhaps too much for one short presentation, but a great taster for the book itself.

A talk from English Heritage covering the massive tasks of conservation and repair of structures at risk was also wide ranging. Encouragingly, Tim Allen was able to quote tremendous improvements from the current statistics, with the 7% figure of "monuments at high risk" recorded for 2001 in the county, reduced down to 1% in 2009. One assumes the criteria for "monuments at high risk" for both years are comparable. One of the questions raised by a NEDIAS member brought the subject closer to home, with query as to what current work is being undertaken to protect the Unstone coke ovens, highlighting local concern for important industrial sites.

The Creswell Heritage Trust highlighted the creation of the new museum for Creswell Crags to showcase some of the rarest Ice Age finds from the caves. The £7 million project, principally funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, was completed last year. The museum will safeguard the future of Creswell Crags by creating a centre of excellence for telling its Ice Age story to school children, local communities and tourists, and will underpin the site's national and international prominence. If you haven't yet made a visit to see the new facilities and to take a tour to see the cave art, it is highly recommended.

The presentation by Jon Humble of EH was on the subject of coal, and activity that at its peak in 1913 employed 10% of the English population. It has been mentioned many times that the visible coal heritage conservation in Derbyshire is dwarfed by the activities in Nottinghamshire. However, the speaker pointed to the extension of activities at Pleasley Pit, indicating that this was being strongly supported as the focal point for EH's King Coal heritage conservation in Derbyshire.

Finally, the presentation which seemed to raise most interest and questions was given by Oliver Jessop on the

archaeology of a pipe foundry, the Biwater works at Clay Cross. Delegates mentioned the lack of archival information used by ARCUS in this rapid survey prior to redevelopment, and suggesting that a mass of information on the previous processes and equipment was readily available from County archives for the asking. Cliff Williams book *Clay Cross and the Clay Cross Company* was mentioned by the speaker as an excellent reference. Cliff himself was there, and received the best applause of the day when in clearing up one point, he mentioned that his much larger 70,000 word thesis on the subject was available in the Local Studies Library for all to see. QED!

## A Local Bus with a Chequered History

*Doug Spencer*

**GO 5538** started life as a Daimler CH6 #9061, fitted with a Birch H28/24R\* body #14327 and was new in 1931 to E. Brickwood Limited trading as 'RedLine' (a London Independent). In December 1933 it was taken over by London Passenger Transport Board and numbered DST 5 and used on service 183A (out of Harrow Weald garage). It was withdrawn in 1935 and its body used on STL1262, an AEC Regent (which in 1944 was wrecked by a flying bomb!).

In March 1935 the chassis was sold to C & P Sales, London SE15; then in 1936 it was bought by Roberts of Connahs Quay and fitted with a Park Royal C31F\*\* body. In July 1936 it was bought by Crosville Motor Services and numbered U27 and subsequently renumbered U12 in 1937.

In October 1937 the coach was bought by W. B. Wintour of London W1 and later in 1937 bought by Cleaver, Leicester.

In January 1942 it was bought by **Brown of Brimington**; then in March 1949 it was bought by Mellor of Enderby and by September 1949 by

Graveling & Woolton of Upper Benefield. There we lose track of it – unless, of course, anybody knows different!



Whoever would have thought that this coach operated by local operator G E Brown of Brimington was once a London double-decker? (*Brimington & Tipton Local History Group Archives*)

\* H(ighbridge) 28 seats in the upper saloon and 24 in the lower R(ear entrance)

\*\* C(oach) 31 seats F(orward entrance)

Reference 'Ian's Bus Stop' [http://www.countrybus.org/ST/ST\\_a4.html](http://www.countrybus.org/ST/ST_a4.html)

## Letter to the Editor – a Request for information

The editor has received a request for information from Mr Greg Evans of Kettering, and I summarise the main elements:

*I write to ask if NEDIAS could supply closure dates for the following ironworks in north east Derbyshire:*

- *Renishaw – late 60s?*
- *Sheepbridge – is 17 Dec 1961 correct?*
- *Clay Cross – ca Aug 1958?*
- *Staveley*

*The information is required to complete my research into the history of Pitsford Quarry, Northamptonshire, owned by Pitsford Ironstone Co. I have quite a lot of information on the tonnages sent by Pitsford to the Derbyshire blast furnaces but little information for your end.*

*An ancillary question is, did Sheepbridge purely produce pig iron?*

Ron Presswood has already been able provide the following information:

1. *Clay Cross blast furnaces were demolished in 1959 so a date for closure of August 1958 seems probable.*
2. *The official announcement by Staveley Iron and Chemical Co Ltd that Sheepbridge blast furnaces would probably cease production on the 17 November 1961 was made on 6 October 1961.*
3. *The last two Staveley blast furnaces were blown out on 4 May 1966.*
4. *Renishaw blast furnaces closed in 1967.*

Can any member provide further information? Please reply to Cliff Lea for collation and forwarding on.

## I. A. News and Notes

### Derbyshire Blue Plaques

We recently received the following request from the County Council to recommend sites where Blue Plaques might be appropriate:

#### Derbyshire Blue Plaque Scheme

*We hope that members of your organisation might be interested in nominating Derbyshire people or places to be honoured by a Blue Plaque. Your suggestions would be very welcome.*

*Blue Plaques tribute launched - nominate a famous person or place. Derbyshire has a fascinating history and we are keen to celebrate some of the important people and events linked to the county. That's why we're introducing our new Blue Plaque Award scheme and we want you to tell us which people, buildings and sites you think really deserve recognition.*

*Nominations can cover such themes as: war heroes and memorials, local heroes and famous people, cultural and heritage connections, philanthropists and entrepreneurs and buildings of historic or architectural importance. People commemorated in Blue Plaques must have been deceased for at least 20 years. Owners of nominated properties must agree to the nomination.*

*Nominations can be made online at [www.derbyshire.gov.uk/blueplaques](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/blueplaques) or by writing to Blue Plaques, Chief Executive's Office, Derbyshire County Council, County Hall, Matlock DE4 3AG. Nominations should be of no more than 500 words.*

If you have suggestions which you think NEDIAS should promote, please contact Cliff Lea.

## Pleasley Pit

Work is well underway at Pleasley Pit in extensive repair to the North and South headstocks, the South roof and the engine-house floors. The view and appearance will change since the east side windows are to be unblocked with renewal of the frames. The exterior of the engine houses will receive attention with missing stonework re-instated, sills repaired and repainting. Upgrade to the electric supply is included, replacing existing diesel generator with new mains feed.

## EMIAC 79 - The Swannington Incline

The next EMIAC Heritage Day, titled "*Swanning Around Swannington*" will be on Saturday 22nd May 2010, and is being hosted by the Leicestershire Industrial History Society at Swannington. The main focus will be on the Swannington Incline, and may be an interesting comparison with those railway inclines closer to home.

Full details and a booking form can be downloaded from the web site: <http://www.lihs.org.uk/emiacs.html> or Tel 0116 291 9706

## Cancellation of Meetings

It is always difficult to contact all members when meetings have to be cancelled, but I think we managed to contact almost all before the January meeting, either by email or by phone. Can you make sure that we have preferably your email, and certainly your phone number so that we can ensure updated records. Those with an email address can email it directly to [cliff@nedias.org.uk](mailto:cliff@nedias.org.uk) so that you can be included on any future mailings.

## NEDIAS Archives

Don't forget that NEDIAS hold some archives that might help you in your own research. Recent additions (donated by Peter Hawkins) include a video *Travels by Tram through Belgium – Waterloo to Wemmel*, and the official government reports on explosions at mines in Gresford (1934), Wharnccliffe Woodmoor (1936), North Gawber (1935), Bilsthorpe (1934) and Hartley Bank (1924).

Pete Wilson holds our archives, and if you haven't already done so, you can obtain CD-ROM with details of the full holdings in our archives. They are for use of NEDIAS members, and readily available for your loan.

## AGM – 8th March 2010

Our AGM will be at 7.30 on the evening of 8 March. Nominations to join the Committee would be most welcome, new ideas and faces are what help to energise NEDIAS and to help us to move forward. If you'd like to discuss in more detail, please phone Pat Pick (01246 272181) or Cliff Lea (01246 234212). Please see the enclosed Agenda and Nomination Form.

After the AGM we will be able to hear the presentation which had been cancelled from the snows of January, from Patrick Morriss on the subject of the Cromford Canal. See further details below.

## Cromford Canal

Just in December, the Friends of Cromford Canal joined forces with local councils throughout the area of the canal and with interested environmental organisations, in the formation of the Cromford Canal Trust, a body similar to the Chesterfield Canal Trust. There is an ambitious £57M scheme, and the Friends aim is the complete restoration to navigation of the entire 17 mile length from Langley Mill to Cromford and Pinxton. There is much enthusiastic support, and Patrick Morriss' visit to NEDIAS at our March meeting is an opportune time to learn more, and to show our support.

..... and Finally ...

## ... The Big Freeze

Cliff Lea

**D**uring the recent long spell of snow and ice, my thoughts turned to the harsh life working the Chesterfield Canal in its heyday when similar conditions prevailed. I recall myself boating along the Llangollen Canal (and onto the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct) one freezing Easter week, when we had several inches of snow, and when we had to un-freeze the mooring ropes before we could set off each morning – but at least we had to contend only with light surface icing.

“Boatie” Clark gives graphic descriptions (see his book *Upgate and Downgate: Working the Chesterfield Canal in the 1930s*, Hallamshire Press, 2000) of working an ice-boat, as the icebreakers were termed on the Chesterfield, when the ice-boat broke up heavy surface ice, and led a convoy of working boats along a narrow channel through the ice in its wake. The ice-boat was hauled along by horses, thrashed from side to side by the five or six “Sallyens” who stood along the top grasping a steel bar fixed along the length from stem to stern, and rocking sideways in unison.

After a day moving forward slowly, and with the onset of a freezing night in prospect, the ice-boat crew would hope to be invited to share the tiny cabin in one of the following work boats with a good Samaritan boatman.

“The result was really unbelievable. The hard, small, inaccessible bed unrolled from its cupboard along the bulkhead had barely room for the boat’s usual crew of two, especially if they were a bit on the heavy side. The answer was to sleep across the bed with your feet sticking out almost on the little coal stove (which was usually kept alight all night in the bitter weather). Can you imagine the situation? I’ll always remember it vividly.

“The usual smells of paint, tar, bilges, mud, plus four sets of garments (often wet), four sets of bodies, remembering that we never got a good bath, unless we had one on the limited occasions we had a night at home. Add to all this tobacco, chewed and smoked, and on top of all, four soggy sets of boots and socks plus the feet which lived therein!

“I am now getting old, but I can remember the ‘quaint smell’.”



## NEDIAS Committee:

**Chairman and publications** – Cliff Lea; **Vice-Chairman** – Derek Grindell; **Secretary** – Patricia Pick; **Treasurer** – Pamela Alton; **Membership Secretary** – Jean Heathcote; **Lecture Meetings and Visits Co-ordinator** – Brian Dick; **Archivist** – Pete Wilson; **Committee Members** – Diana Wilmot, David Hart, Les Mather, David Palmer.

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