



NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE
INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY
SOCIETY

Newsletter No. 6 - May 2002

Editorial

Since Newsletter No. 5 was published in February, we have had three very well attended lecture evenings and a successful visit to Clayton's Tannery. The talk by David Siddon on the potteries of Brampton brought in a number of new faces, as well as some highly interesting pieces of pottery. Hopefully David will return soon with a talk on the Whittington Moor potteries, including Pearson's. Your committee is currently working hard to finalise the talks programme for next winter and, hopefully, this will include a number of faces you have met before but with new subjects as well as some very different speakers and topics. Rumour has it, the chairman's AGM evening talk might not be about railways!

In the meantime, we are rounding off the current season's meetings with two events likely to generate very considerable interest, the talks by David Hey and Michael Bailey. Then we have the summer outdoor meetings, in the midst of which we have a second chance to catch Malcolm Bond's (indoor) talk on the Ashover Light Railway featured as part of the Clay Cross Celebration Week.

The committee's work in arranging these events prompts the reminder that we still have vacant seats on the committee. The growth in interest and enthusiasm within NEDIAS, plus increasing external activities and a growing public awareness of our existence, means we need more people to take an active part in the Society's affairs. Visits arranger, newsletter/journal editor, archivist/librarian, are some of the committee roles which first come to mind.

We also need helpers at lecture meetings, from welcoming arrivals, organising the room layout and equipment, down to helping with the tea and coffee and washing up! If able to help, please contact any of the existing committee members at the meeting or contact the Chairman/Editor at the address below. A warm welcome awaits!

We would also like to give members the opportunity of declaring any special interests in industrial or transport history/archaeology or related fields in which they have experience. The membership application form will shortly be updated but, in the meantime, we hope current members will assist by completing the proforma attached to this Newsletter and return it to the Membership Secretary. Information given will be retained solely for the benefit of the Society and will not be passed on to other bodies without the written permission of the originator.

Further down these pages we have an appeal for members to join a proposed Field Study Group for NEDIAS. After all, the 'A' in NEDIAS does stand for 'Archaeology' and, while the lectures and visits are very valuable for the increase of personal knowledge, the exploration and recording of old industrial sites can be even more stimulating. If the great outdoors is not your thing, then what about some historical research? You might think from the quality of information from our speakers that it has all been done already - it has not. Perhaps you feel someone else may already be working on the subject you have in mind? If so, why not get in touch, combine resources and work together? Whether you have a complete article or just an outline, or want to make a request to members for information, your contribution would be gratefully received.

David Wilmot

Spring & Summer Programme, 2002

Monday, 13th May - 7.30pm, at the **Friends Meeting House**, Ashgate. Road, Chesterfield,
David Hey - *Packhorse Routes in the Peak District.*

Tuesday 28th May - 7.30pm, Chesterfield Library Lecture Theatre - Organised jointly by NEDIAS and Chesterfield Local Studies Library - ***The Engineering and History of Stephenson's "Rocket" Locomotive*** - **Dr. Michael Bailey & John Glithero**. Tickets are now on sale at Chesterfield Library, £2.00/£1.20.

Monday 10th June - 7pm, Lumsdale Walk, with **Arkwright Society Guide**. Meet at lay-by opposite school in Lumsdale (from Chesterfield, Lumsdale is 2nd left, after golf course and Quarry Lane). Cost £2.50 payable on the night. Bookings at 13th May meeting or by phoning 01246854180 (evenings).

Tuesday 2nd July - 7.30pm, Clay Cross Social Centre, off Market Street, Clay Cross - **Malcolm Bond, *The Ashover Light Railway*** - Collection at the door for local charity.

Monday 8th July - 7pm, Dronfield Walk, with **Old Dronfield Society**. Meet outside Post Office on main road (on right, just after railway bridge). Bookings at 13th May meeting or by phoning 01246 854180 (evenings).

Monday 12th August - 7pm, Pleasley Pit, guided site visit - Meet at colliery site entrance, reached by turning right from roundabout on A617, then right again in to Coalpit Lane. Bookings at 13th May meeting or by phoning 01246 854180 (evenings).

Saturday 7th September - Guided tour of Magpie Mine surface remains - Details and timings to be confirmed. Names to List at 13th May meeting or by ringing 01246 854180 (evenings) to receive details when available.

Autumn & Winter Programme. 2002/2003

Currently being finalised, based on the existing formula of a 7.30pm start, on the 2nd Monday of each month, at the Friends Meeting House, Ashgate Road. We are aiming to publish details in time for the 28th May meeting. A copy of the programme will be mailed to all members as soon as it becomes available.

Damstead Works, Dronfield, by David Wilmot

One Sunday morning in March, a group of members visited the remains of Damstead Works, in woodland between the river Drone and the old route of the A61 at the invitation of the Old Dronfield Society ("ODS"). The site had been examined some years ago by the IA Section of DAS, had been cleared by ODS about ten years back and had been explored by the South Yorkshire Local History Society around 1995. Derek Bayliss from the latter was also present at the March visit and was interested in the extent to which nature had reclaimed the site. Also, how the passage of time and people had caused damage and erosion to the features previously recorded.

The works had originated in the mid-19th century as a spindle manufactory for the textile trade. It had subsequently been used as a dye works before being abandoned and decaying for many years so that all that remains today is evidence of some floors, wall footings, plus flue and chimney bases. The site is owned by Derbyshire County Council but there are no apparent plans for it to be developed or conserved.

NEDIAS had been asked to visit because of local concerns that this significant industrial site would soon be lost if conservation of the remains was not carried out. There was a view that its setting, in a quiet part of Dronfield yet close to its centre, deserved a better fate than being abandoned to the elements.

Our members present largely shared that view and, after looking at some archive material held by the ODS, NEDIAS has agreed to assist at the site.

The first step will be to re-examine the papers handed over by DAS and the findings of SYIHS to complete a site survey document. There are detailed dimensions, down to widths of doorways but no clear plans of the site. ODS has billheads and other items give a picture of the factory in its heyday. SYIHS has researched the history of spindle making and drawn up a clear description of the site, so the culmination ought to be the completion of a survey document which allows interpretation of the remains. That, in turn, should allow a case to be made for conservation of the site by DCC or permission to another body to carry out the work on its behalf. It would also make a good starting point for a NEDIAS Field Study Group, which brings us to ...

Formation of Field Study Group

Committee member Paul Smith has kindly agreed to lead a group within NEDIAS to specialise in the examination of the industrial archaeology remaining on the ground around our area of interest, starting with the Damstead Works site. Paul is currently immersed in certain work to meet the academic expectations of those who must be obeyed at Sheffield University but, hopefully by the end of May, he will be able to rediscover the benefits of fresh air. Will anyone interested in taking part (with or without archaeological qualifications or digging experience) please make themselves known to Paul as soon as possible. If not found at NEDIAS meetings, he can be contacted at 01246237069 or by email to pesmith1000@hotmail.com.

The various sets of coke ovens at Unstone are also a concern of Old Dronfield Society members and the Field Study Group will also be looking in to their current state in the not too distant future. It is also hoped to have a NEDIAS visit to the oven remains before too long. They were the subject of two comprehensive articles in both the DAS Journal and the Industrial

Archaeology Review about six year ago but, despite the interest of English Heritage in one of the sites, no progress has been made towards their conservation for some years. We have heard that this situation is now likely to change but at present have no firm information about any revival of the conservation proposal nor who might be involved.

Markham Colliery

On a similar vein to Jack Smith's item on the NCB's Road Transport Service in NEDIAS Newsletter No. 5, your editor has read an article in the Spring Newsletter (No. 7) of the Friends of Pleasley Pit. In the article Mr. Geoff Gilbert describes his experiences of the winding procedures at Markham Colliery in 1944. The article is well detailed and most interesting. Purchase of a copy of the Newsletter is recommended for any coal industry historian, budding or otherwise (Here your editor has to declare that his copy was received as a member of the Friends of Pleasley Pit).

The Clay Cross Company Site Visit, by David Wilmot

Thanks to the good offices of Russ Wilson of BCC Pipe, site visits were arranged for David Wilmot and Pat Pick in November 2001, and for NEDIAS with Derbyshire Archaeological Society's I A Section in February 2002. The visits followed a request to NEDIAS from the Clay Cross Regeneration Project to look at the site's heritage aspects. The DAS team took a series of photographs and their findings are expected shortly. The notes below are from the first visit, made just before demolition of the cupola furnace.

The Works' history, in brief, stems from construction of the North Midland Railway from Derby to Leeds, being founded in 1837 as *George Stephenson & Company*. The name changed to *the Clay Cross Company* after the death of George and the subsequent severing of connection with the district by his son, Robert. As well as the production of cast-iron pipes, the company operated extensive coal mines in the area to the south of Chesterfield, quarried minerals (particularly ironstone and limestone) around Clay Cross, Ashover and Crich, also having claypits and a brickworks at Hephthome Lane.

The main site at Clay Cross occupies a large triangular plot of land bounded by the Chesterfield-Derby railway line to the west, the Erewash Valley line to the east and the Clay Cross-North Wingfield Road (A6175) to the south. As well as the iron foundries, the site had included colliery shafts and coke ovens. The latter fed a gas works which, along with the later electricity generating station, supplied both works site and township.

More recently, the Clay Cross site and the Ashover area quarries were acquired by the Biwater Group, whose name was adopted. Cast-iron pipe production was the core business activity by that time. In mid-2000 the Biwater group sold its Clay Cross business to the French conglomerate, Saint Gobain. In December 2000 the latter transferred production of castings from Clay Cross to Staveley and closed the site, with the loss of some 700 jobs. In November 2001, just a small team of site maintenance engineers remained, employed by the St. Gobain subsidiary, BCC Pipe.

At this time the pipe shop and its equipment remained intact but the prospects for future use were unclear. BCC Pipe's final stocks of pipe were being removed at that time, with just two trailer loads remaining. One stack of Biwater's pipe remained in the yard.

Few recent changes were seen to structures on the site. The original red-brick furnace wall had

been demolished as unsafe in mid-2001 and the two Clay Cross Company wooden bodied coal wagons removed from its top had been donated to Barrow Hill Engine Shed Society. The more modern, gas-fired, cupola furnace - a steel structure some 50 feet high - was to be felled in early December 2001, decisively closing the door on metal melting on the site after more than a hundred and sixty years. The cupola was photographed prior to demolition but under poor light conditions. However, it is understood that a large number of photographs of the site were taken for the property transfer to St. Gobain and that Russ Wilson has a further collection. The following notes describe the works as at November 2001.

The site today bears little immediate evidence of its historic importance. The Khartoum Foundry complex is a range of four large bays, with thick brick walls and industrial arched windows, now covered externally by modern cladding. Its roofing is a mixture of cast-iron or steel trusses and tie-bars. The mould-making machinery is still in situ, as are the casting pits. Each bay is some 50 feet across and estimated to be at least 200 feet long.

A few small buildings appear to have survived from earlier uses. A workshop close to the original route of the standard gauge Clay Cross Goods branch line has a short length of 2-foot gauge track embedded in its floor from the internal railway system of the works. Otherwise there is no clear evidence of any railway connection within the site - except for copious use of steel rail for boundary fencing and a railway style cast-iron crane base-post between the former track-bed and the workshop.

Near to the Bridge Street entrance, there is a large, circular, flat topped concrete block. This is about three feet high and some ten feet across, resembling a capped pit shaft. Its origin was not confirmed during our visit.

The large power house (said to have once used an ex-submarine diesel powered generating set) remains externally intact. Its two wooden cooling towers have not survived. Further on, towards the north end of the site, the company offices of 1908 and 1921 (dated over the doors) remain intact. The interiors, including the Board Room in the later building, were not examined. However, we were advised that the documents remaining inside had been viewed by the County Archives department but nothing of sufficient interest found.

Towards the north corner of the site, a brick-lined circular pit of about 40 feet diameter once contained a gas-holder. This is now the only visible evidence of coke production, the original coke ovens having been long demolished. Nearby, there is a low-brick building, said to have been the blacksmith shop, but now empty and deemed unsafe. Its end-wall contains a circular opening near the peak, with oil-stains below, suggesting possible previous use as a winding house. However, the surrounding ground has been levelled leaving no surface evidence of earlier use. A colliery shaft survived on this part of the site, after the pits had closed, to serve as an escape route from Parkhouse Colliery but its exact location was not identified.

The modern long-shop on the east side of the site, next to the pipe stock yard, is complete with ovens for baking the coated pipes on an efficient, production-line basis. Its introduction had concentrated the coating process in one building but, of the several smaller buildings and sheds previously used, only one remains. During erection of the new shop, much rubble had been dumped on the north-eastern side of the works, covering any evidence of the area's earlier uses.

The Company sports ground, near the south-west side of the site, still contains the body of Coach No. 4 of the Ashover Light Railway and the octagonal *Where the Rainbow Ends* cafe, opened at Ashover Butts in 1926 and relocated on the John Street sports field circa 1950. The coach is used by the Biwater Bowling Club, while the cafe serves as a sports pavilion. Both look to be well maintained but their future is not clear.

The Ashover coach is one of three remaining from the four originals built in 1924 specifically for the line and in use until 1936. The other two surviving coaches are believed to be stored in Lincolnshire, pending construction of a new narrow gauge railway at Skegness.

(For further reading, and for reference to existing published photographs of the site, see the volumes on Clay Cross by Frank Dwelly and by Cliff Williams (from Sutton Publishing), as well as *The Ashover Light Railway* by Robert Gratton & Stuart Band. The latter includes a particularly clear aerial photograph of the site in 1937.)

And Finally ...

Have you noticed anything new about this Newsletter? Our publicity expert, Cliff Lea, has come up with the stylish logo for NEDIAS shown on page 1. The logo encapsulates the main aspects of industrial history in this part of the world. We hope it will become well known and seen widely over the coming years. Thank you, Cliff (and Katie, Cliff's daughter).

The Officers of the Society:

Chairman - David Wilmot; Secretary - Patricia Pick; Treasurer - Pamela Alton Membership Secretary/Assistant Treasurer - Jean Heathcote; Publicity Officer - Cliff Lea; Lecture Meetings Organiser - Malcolm Fisher; Newsletter Editor - David Wilmot. Committee members - David Hart, Paul Smith, Jack Smith, Pete Wilson.

Published by North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society. Hon. Editor; David Wilmot MA, 2 Bright Street, North Wingfield, Chesterfield S42 5LR (01246 854180 or email davidrhwilmot@talk21.com). Copyright of the contents is retained by the authors.