

# North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society



NEDIAS Newsletter No. 61 – February 2016  
Price: £2.00 (Free to Members)



## Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site

**A**t Cromford Mills, a £4M project will be coming to an end next month, culminating in the opening of an impressive new Gateway Visitor Centre. This has involved careful restoration of the 5-storey Building 17, which will cater for small businesses on the upper floors; the two lower floors have now been fully fitted out to tell the story of the whole of the UNESCO Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. The Visitor Centre has a 3-dimensional 30ft plan of the valley from Masson Mill to Derby, and through many interpretation panels and touch-screen information terminals it highlights and describes the many attractions along the 15 mile route.



After looking through the displays, and as you process through the Visitor Centre past a number of displays, shop and movie screens, **you emerge right into Sir Richard Arkwright's office. This is right inside the so-important 1771 mill - the world's first successful water powered cotton spinning mill, and where the world's first example of a "factory system" - both shift system and production line - was put into operation for the very first time. Arkwright will spot visitors as they enter his domain - he will be a 3-dimensional projection/hologram, and he'll**



**talk to you, but I'll say no more, There are a few surprises!**

In mid-March it will be officially opened by Brian Blessed, a man who has visited a number of times, is President of the Friends of Cromford Canal, and who has great enthusiasm for the World Heritage Site. In fact look out for the forthcoming publicity and make a fresh visit this Spring - **it's not everyone** who has a UNESCO World Heritage Site on their doorstep!

**In this issue:** ■ Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site ■ **What's On?** ■ The Ford Motor Car in Chesterfield ■ Sir George Kenning ■ Robert Blincoe, Ellis Needham and the Litton Mill ■ I A News & Notes ■ **Chairman's Chat** ■ And **Finally ... coal closures** ■

# WHAT'S ON?

## NEDIAS Lecture Programme

**M**eetings are held at: **St Thomas' Centre, Chatsworth Road, Brampton (opposite Vauxhall/Bristol St Motors) S40 3AW. There's plenty of parking in their own car park, including disabled spaces, as well as on-road parking in front of the Church. All meetings commence at 7:30pm.**

Monday, 8th February 2016	<b>"The Railways of the Upper Derwent Valley Part 2 – Bamford filters, Rivelin Tunnel and Ladybower Reservoir"</b> by Ted Hancock
Monday, 14th March 2016	AGM <b>"Derbyshire Oil"</b> by Cliff Lea
Monday, 11th April 2016	<b>"William Jessop"</b> by Martyn Taylor-Cockaigne
Monday, 9th May 2016	DAVID WILMOT MEMORIAL LECTURE. <b>"From Sheffield Victoria to Chesterfield Central on the Manchester, Sheffield &amp; Lincolnshire Railway"</b> by Ken Granger

## Other Diary Dates

Thursday, 18th February 2016	<b>"The Merry Go Round Has Stopped"</b> by Dave Darwin. 7:30pm Barrow Hill Roundhouse. Info: <a href="http://www.barrowhill.org/socialcalendar.html">http://www.barrowhill.org/socialcalendar.html</a> (Doors open @ 7:00pm)
Wednesday, 2nd March 2016	<b>"James Brindley – His Life, His Last Canal and its Unique Boats"</b> Lecture by Christine Richardson and John Lower. 7:30pm Winding Wheel, Chesterfield. Tickets 01246 345222. <i>(See also James Brindley Day, Sat 7 May the "NEDIAS Visits" section.)</i>
Tuesday, 8th March 2016	<b>"Development of Britain's Atomic Bomb"</b> by Jonathan Aylen. SYIHS/ SMEA Lecture at Holiday Inn Royal Victoria Hotel, Sheffield. 5.30pm for 6.00pm. Info: Derek Bayliss, 01142307693/ v.bayliss@btinternet.com. Admission £2
Tuesday, 5th April 2016	<b>"Steel and World War 1"</b> by Geoff Smales. C&DFHS. 7:30pm St. Hugh's Roman Catholic Church, Littlemoor, Chesterfield S41 8QP. Admission £3/£2
Thursday, 7th April 2016	Ted Hancock – <b>"The Dore and Chinley Railway – The Hope Valley Line"</b> 7:30pm Barrow Hill Roundhouse. Info: <a href="http://www.barrowhill.org/socialcalendar.html">http://www.barrowhill.org/socialcalendar.html</a> (Doors open @ 7:00pm)
Saturday, 9th April 2016	The official launch of the Barrow Hill Heritage Trail will take place during a Village Open Day, 11:00am-4:00pm, when all of the buildings in this Victorian Model Village will be open, free of charge, and a range of Victorian themed activities will be taking place. The Chesterfield Canal Hub and Roundhouse Railway Centre will also be open. <a href="http://www.barrowhillheritagetrail.wordpress.com">www.barrowhillheritagetrail.wordpress.com</a>
Monday, 18th April 2016	<b>"The Sheffield Armaments Industry in 1914"</b> by Chris Corker. SYIHS 7:30pm at Kelham Island Museum. Info: Derek Bayliss, 01142307693/v.bayliss@btinternet.com. Admission £2.

# The Ford Motor Car in Chesterfield

Darrell Clark

With the recent acquisition of Chesterfield's main Ford dealer by the Perry Group, I thought it appropriate to place on record some of the history of the Ford motor car in Chesterfield.

During the years when Haslam and Harvey were organising the coal miners in this region into a powerful trade union, industrial expansion proceeded at a great pace. The leading figure of this rapid growth was Charles Paxton Markham; during his career he collected a formidable collection of Chairmanships of companies in the coal, iron and heavy engineering across South Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

An early personal acquisition was made in 1889 when he took over the Broad Oaks Engineering Works from William Oliver, which had gone into liquidation. This heavy engineering and manufacturing company had a very unusual addition – the selling and servicing of Henry Ford's Model T vehicles.

ADVTS. 45

CHESTERFIELD.

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Markham's advertisement in a travel magazine of 1914

The cars advertised in this advertisement of 1914 were assembled at Trafford Park, Manchester, a combination of engines and chassis from the Detroit Plant in the USA and English components including the bodies to complete the vehicles.

No British manufacturer could match their prices in 1914 and earlier. However the venture under Charles Markham appears to have come to an end in 1916, as it was taken on by George Kenning; his involvement with William Morris at Clay Cross is of course another story.

George Kenning (Chesterfield) Ltd. was a company quite separate to Kennings Ltd. (the shareholders were strictly family members).

The showroom and workshop for the Ford car was set up in 1922; where it was between 1916 and 1922 we have no evidence unfortunately. The second photograph shows the Vicar Lane premises in 1967 with Bas Stone the Driving Instructor with his ex-demonstrator Mark 1 Cortina JRA 4D. "Yours truly" had a Cortina Super JRA 6D at this time.

The third photograph shows the sales staff in a group standing at the garage entrance on the very last day of business before the move to the brand new showroom



Markham's dealer plate on the dash of Model T R1367

CHESTERFIELD 1914 SHOPPING FESTIVAL.



**IS 40 MILES AN HOUR**

good enough? Do you wish to climb hills quickly and without trouble? Do you require comfort in travel, ease of control, quick acceleration, a smoothly running engine? Is 30 miles to the gallon satisfactory? And 8000 miles and upwards from the driving wheel tyres? and long life? and a running cost that compares with 3rd class train fare?

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**MARKHAM & CO., LTD.,**

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Telegrams: "Broad Oaks, Chesterfield." Telephone No. 19.

Markham's advert in the 1914 Chesterfield Shopping Festival Magazine



George Kenning (Chesterfield) Ltd showroom on Vicar Lane. The date appears to be 1922. The Model T Ford just to be seen in the window is a 1922 model (the first model with electric side lights on top of the front wings)



George Kenning (Chesterfield) Ltd. showroom on Vicar Lane showing Mk.I Cortina JRA4D now relegated to driving school duties, an early Mk.II Cortina and across the road a maroon/grey Ford Anglia.



Photograph of the sales staff at George Kenning (Chesterfield) Ltd. Vicar Lane showroom on the very last day of trading before the move to Chatsworth Road. From L to R the personnel are: Darrell Clark, Jack Cox, Douglas Cooke, John Hare, Norman Southern, Frank Gorman, David Priestnall, Bill Contrill, and Eric Turner. April 1967?



Yours truly driving Model T Ford R1367 in competition on Cromford Meadows in conjunction with the Matlock Motor Club in 1970

a car wash and workshop for vehicle preparation at the rear. Also now long gone was a set of petrol pumps immediately in front of the showroom; this operation did not survive long! I suspect as there was a petrol pump and a lady attendant at Vicar Lane (serving petrol over the public footpath by the way) it was a natural progression.

The next photograph taken in 1968 shows the forecourt of Chatsworth Road during what was called “Ford on Show Week”. For this event the showroom was taken over by a collection of unusual Ford cars, engines that had been cut-away, and other items of a weird and wonderful nature which belonged to Ford Motor Co.

Turning now to the Perry connection with Ford cars, Percival Perry began his association with Henry Ford in the winter of 1903-1904. Trading as Perry, Thornton and Schiber, joining with one Charles Rush who had returned from a visit to the USA with a Ford concession which gave him the rights to sell Ford cars exclusively for five years; for this he had to pay £50 per annum.

By the autumn of 1904 Perry Thornton and Schiber had been incorporated with a cash injection of £10,000. A catalogue produced by the company for 1905 showed a 2-cylinder model A and B at a retail price of £225.

on Chatsworth Road. Included in the group: myself and my old friends Frank Gorman and David Priestnall, the original founders of Autoworld, which had its origins in 1972 in Eckington.

The new Chatsworth Road premises comprised of the large showroom, open spaces for used cars, and



The new Chatsworth Road showroom during the "Ford on Show" week during the late 1960s  
 The Model T Fords KK781 and R1367 are on both sides of a working model of Henry Ford's first vehicle, called a Quadricycle; this replica had been made by the apprentices at Ford's Dagenham Plant in the 1960s. The Model T R1367 was of course the first Model T in what was to become a large collection by the 21st century, collected by my cousin, Bruce Lilleker of Hasland. The other Model T, a Kent registered pick-up car, was recovered by Bruce totally derelict and brought back to life by him.



Model T Ford R1367 parked outside Vicar Lane showroom. The Ford Anglias in the showroom date the photograph to 1963-1965.

The new Model N had been released by Ford in Detroit in July 1906. It was a major step forward, being light, strong with a 4-cylinder 15HP engine, with an excellent performance, using mass-produced components to achieve an unprecedented low cost, even with the use of high performance alloys, rather than cheaper metals. This was emphasised by the statement that the Ford Motor Company was the only mass manufacturer in the world making its own Vanadium Steel.

In fact it was at that time the only volume vehicle manufacturer to use such expensive material.

No UK sales figure are available for any of the Ford early models, but it can be correctly told that the Model N car sold in relatively high numbers, based on its quality, reliability and its retail price. (Model T numbers peaked in 1923 with 150,000 made at Trafford Park – <http://www.modeltregister.co.uk/the-model-t-ford.html> )

Based on the success of the Model N, Percival Perry & Co. who had the sole franchise for Ford in the UK was able to expand his network of sub-dealers to cover the whole country. Is this the point when Charles Markham was approached to become a dealer? Sadly we have no information before the year 1914.

Motor vehicles had only been required to be registered for the first time in 1903; in that year, all vehicles, irrespective of the year they came into use, were given and required to display a registration number on them. This for the first time gave a snapshot of the total number of vehicles in use in the UK. The number of private cars shown was 8,465, which to some readers may seem a large figure. However to compare with 5th April 1910, the first year the Model T Ford became available for sale, some 53,000 private and light goods vehicles were newly registered.

The Model T Ford received its launch at the London Motor Show, Olympia, on 13th November 1908. The new car was exhibited on the stand of the Ford agents, Perry Thornton and Scriber.

Although at this time no-one remotely suspected it, 92 years later the Model T would be declared the Motor Car of the Century!

It is not surprising the motoring press of 1908 paid little attention to the Ford Model T, as a total of 300+ makers and models were on display that November.

The main focus of the British market in 1908 was on the luxury cars of £500 plus, rather than vehicles priced at £200. However it was stated that the number of orders Perry Thornton and Scriber sold on their stand was 253, a figure that must have exceeded the wildest dream of the partners. From the early beginnings of 1903-1904 under Percival Perry's leadership.

**Perry's acquisition of the GK Group a well respected family-run business, allows them to extend their Ford dealerships to seven. Perry's East Midlands, as it will be known from now on, from last year's (2014) figures gives a profitable £164 million to group profits.**



Early Perry's Advert

Equally the Kenning Motor group as it became from those early beginnings in Clay Cross and Vicar Lane in Chesterfield under the now Sir George Kenning and under his sons by 1985 had become a world wide company! With over 25 different vehicle franchises with petrol and lubricants distribution, with car hire and even a hotel within its portfolio.

After the group's ill-fated relationship with the Wadham-Stringer Group of Dorset, the family revived the new, now much smaller, enterprise as the GK Group, eventually beginning to expand again, taking over old-



The very latest Ford in Chatsworth Road showrooms. 5 litre Mustang, priced at £35,000. Wow! A long way from £135 for a Model T

established Ford dealers such as the County Garage in Carlisle, giving the GK label a multi-franchise operation which not only included Ford, but Mazda, Fiat, Citroën, with showrooms locally in Worksop, Retford, Dronfield, Sheffield and of course Chesterfield.

Then after much speculation of the closing of the Chatsworth Road and Barker Lane premises, and the rumour of relocating to face the roundabout on the site of the old Bryan Donkin works, came the **announcement in September 2015 that Kennings was to become Perry's.**

With that announcement the oldest Ford franchise holder had come to Chesterfield to continue to sell the Ford car just 99 years after George Kenning had taken over from Charles Markham.

Acknowledgements:

This article has been prepared from material published in *"The English Model T Ford"*, Vol I and II by the Model T Ford Register of Great Britain, co-written with others by Bruce Lilleker, and some personal recollections by myself.

Sir George Kenning

David Bevis

**M**ost NEDIAS members will think of Brampton as the home to Robinsons, Brampton Brewery, the various potteries and as the venue for our monthly meetings. Almost forgotten will be the **important role it played in the growth of the Kenning motor empire. From the 1960's Brampton was home to the Kenning Motor Group's HQ at Manor Offices on Old Road.**

These offices supported a business that, by then, had 8,000 employees and had a presence in over 300 locations across the country. The Ford dealership showroom was on Chatsworth Road and the servicing and parts departments were on Barker Lane. There was also a tyre re-mould works on Factory Street.

My curiosity about the origins of this large motor empire led me to do some research on Sir George Kenning (and associated family) and document it below.

Sir George Kenning was a Derbyshire entrepreneur who grew the family business from a small corner shop in Clay Cross to a nation-wide car dealership that employed around 2,000 people at the time of his death. Although born (in 1880) prior to the motor age, most of Sir George's business career was based around the motor industry. He quickly recognized the potential of motorized transport and became one of the early pioneers in selling, servicing and financing its use by industry, commerce and private individuals. He was also active as a local councillor and benefactor. He was knighted in 1943.

Business Career

George grew the family business from its single corner shop in Clay Cross, then to locations around Chesterfield. By the time of his death in 1956, Kenning had the largest set of car dealerships in Derbyshire and he had 80 dealerships spread over 18 counties. In terms of number of employees, George saw the

business grow from a shop run by family members to one that employed 2,000 people. In terms of finance, Kennings was registered as a private company with a capital of £100,000 in 1930, in 1939 the firm converted to a public company and the firm had a turnover of £20m at the time of George's death (1956).

The following is a list of the major events in Kenning's main (dealerships) business and in the many subsidiary businesses in roughly chronological order. In the case of some of the subsidiary businesses, references are made to growth or changes that happened after Kenning's death.

- As a young boy, George continued the business of door-to-door hawking of hardware that his father, Frank, started in 1878.
- In 1891, George started helping out in his father's hardware shop on Clay Cross High Street.
- At about the same time, George helped at his father's hardware stall on Chesterfield Market.
- In 1901, George started up a paraffin distribution business. At that stage, distribution was by horse-drawn cart.
- In 1908, George set up his first hire businesses, one for bicycles (for use by Shell-Mex travelling salesmen) and another for horses (to pull BP wagons). These were pioneering examples of what is now termed “contract hire”. **In later years, George (and subsequent generations) expanded the hire business to car and van rental.** In 1970, the Kennings Group was able to claim a hire fleet of 5000 vehicles.
- In 1910, George gained his first motor sales agency, for BSA Royal Enfield motorcycles.
- George's first motor car agency was with Fords in 1916.
- In 1919, George gained the sole agency for Morris cars in Derbyshire. From this point onwards, he became a long-term business associate and friend of another pioneer of widespread car ownership, Lord Nuffield, who was manufacturer of Morris cars.
- Alongside the agencies that George had negotiated, he set up supporting businesses like forecourt petrol sales, car servicing and car spares sales.
- Soon after that, Kenning won the first agency granted by the truck-making firm Dennis.
- In 1925, he started an association with Reeve Burgess, a Pilsley firm that made truck and bus bodies for mounting on lorry frames. Later on, vehicle-building became another subsidiary business of the Kenning empire, producing milk floats in Shrewsbury and road tankers in Ossett.
- Another subsidiary business was car valeting. In 1939, sophisticated valeting equipment was installed at the London and Sheffield sites.
- As regards motor spares, Kenning became the first agents in the UK for Lucas electrical components and the first for the Tyresoles system of remoulding tyres for longer life.
- George set up the Midlands Counties Motor Finance Company.
- The subsidiary businesses around tyres started by George were subsequently developed and became one of the largest suppliers of car, commercial and earth mover tyres in the country. Kennings also operated three tyre remoulding factories and marketed their own label, Fisk and John Bull, tyres.
- The petrol forecourt business started by George was expanded by his successors. Kenning Motor Group built the Motorway Service sites at Strensham M5 and Anderton M61.

#### Public Life

Alongside his business achievements, George Kenning was also very active in public life:

- He served on Clay Cross Urban District Council for almost 30 years.
- He served on Derbyshire County Council as both a councillor and alderman.
- He was a member of the Liberal Party, but declined invitations to become a member of Parliament.
- As a Justice of the Peace, he served on the bench of the local magistrates court.
- He was a member of the Chesterfield Hospital Board of Management.
- He was an active member of the Methodist Church in Clay Cross.
- He was a member of the freemasons.
- **He provided a recreation ground for use by the people of Clay Cross. This was named “Kenning Park”** and is located on Holmgate Road to the west of the town.

- As a result of his contribution to public life, the-then Alderman George Kenning, JP, was awarded a **knighthood (“Knight Bachelor”)** in the 1943 New Year Honours List “for public services in Derbyshire”. He then became known as “Sir George Kenning”.

#### Business Premises

Kennings had a large number of business premises. They ranged from car showrooms in city centres to tyre factories and office blocks on the outskirts of towns. The showrooms in Leadmill Road, Sheffield[9] and **Queen Street, Derby occupied what would now be called “prime retail” sites in city-centre locations.** They were architect-designed and followed the Art Deco style that was prevalent at the time of building.

The premises in Queen Street, Derby (see Figure 1) were the subject of a special ceremony when they opened **in 1930. Kenning had his first branch in Derby in 1926, but spent £20,000 on building “Morris House” on a more prestigious site.** As well as a car showroom for Morris cars, the depot incorporated garages, repair shops and stores. It was opened by Sir William Morris (later Lord Nuffield), who built cars that were affordable to the middle classes at his works in Cowley, Oxford.

The offices at Clay Cross and the HQ Manor Office building on Old Road in Chesterfield were also notable for their architecture.

Mention also needs to be made of the premises in Clay Cross where the Kenning empire first started. Frank Kenning’s first shop (selling hardware) is at the junction of King Street with the southern end of High Street. The car service building is on a road named Kenning Street. There is also an Art Deco style office building (now the Tower Business Park) towards the northern end of High Street (see Figure 2).

*A version of this article, adapted for Wikipedia, is available on the internet at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir\\_George\\_Kenning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_George_Kenning)*



Fig 1



Fig 2

Robert Blincoe, Ellis Needham and the Litton Mill

*Chas Arnold*

**O**n November 9th I gave a talk to NEDIAS in Chesterfield retelling the story of pauper apprentice Robert Blincoe and his employer, Ellis Needham, at the Litton Mill in Derbyshire. In brief, Blincoe was an orphan abandoned at the age of 4 at the St. Pancras Workhouse in rural Camden Town. At the age of seven he, and 79 other children, were bound as apprentices until the age of 21 to the Lambert family at their cotton spinning mill at Lowdham, Nottinghamshire. In 1803 all, or some, **of them were moved, probably illegally, to Needham’s mill at Litton. The story of Blincoe’s abuse and poor living conditions is well known but is, nonetheless, still horrifying.** The effects of daily beatings, manual labour, poor diet and insanitary living conditions on a growing adolescent boy do not bear thinking about. However the print of Blincoe on the frontispiece of his Memoir gives us a tantalising glimpse.

One of my slides drew attention to some of the issues surrounding the employment of pauper children in the early factories. Among the issues I highlighted were child labour, child abuse, trafficking, government regulation and slavery, all of which have an alarming number of echoes in the world today. In this article I will address the issues of child labour and child abuse in the early Industrial Revolution.

Child labour was hardly an issue in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Common sense suggests that the children of farm workers helped in the fields from the earliest of ages, scaring birds, cleaning stones or

picking up stray stalks of wheat at harvest time. In the home infants would have sat by the fire, carding wool for mum to spin as soon as they were able. That Richard Arkwright employed children from the age of seven upwards for 12 hours a day, six days a week seems not to have raised an eyebrow or objection. The prevailing opinion was that children were contributing to the national wealth as well as family income. The issue is first addressed in the 1802 Factory Act which limited apprentice work to 12 hours. The Factory Act of 1804 subsequently banned night work by apprentices, improved living conditions in the apprentice houses and set up an inspectorate.

However, the fact that child labour was largely accepted does not excuse some of the behaviours of the responsible adults in work places. Robert Blincoe was attacked with fists, feet and all manner of objects. His body was further abused by having weights hung from his ears and body and by having his teeth filed (all the better to eat with). Having his mouth spat into and being made to eat candle ends and old chewing tobacco seems tame by comparison. And so on, every day for ten years whilst at Litton Mill. Literally bearing the scars years later added veracity to a story that seems unbelievable. This is as clear a case of child abuse as can be imagined and rightly contributes to Litton's black reputation.

Evidence from Orphan John, a Bethnal Green orphan, who spent time at Litton and wrote in the Ashton Chronicle in 1849, largely corroborates Blincoe's story. He says, for example, that Needham's sons "used to go up and down the mill with hazel sticks and lay on us most unmercifully. Frank beat me till he was frightened himself. He thought he had killed me. He had struck me on the temples and knocked me senseless". On another occasion his elbow was broken. John Joseph Betts, a pauper apprentice from St. James', Clerkenwell, wrote to The Lion in 1828 in support of Blincoe. St. George's, Hanover Square, recalled 10 children from Litton in 1803 because of their poor conditions. The Inspectors' Reports from 1806 and 1811 agree with Blincoe in general terms. Perhaps the question ought to be asked whether Litton has deservedly marked down as the worst mill for abuse.

The evidence seems to point to other mills being at least as bad as Litton. At nearby Cressbrook, long held as an example of a good mill, abuse seems to have been just as bad. Orphan John, who spent time there also, wrote that Mr Newton "ordered the watchman to strip us, made us mount on one another's backs and would himself flog us with hazel sticks across our buttocks and loins till he cut the flesh and made the blood flow". This was after John had been caught birds' nesting. And for picking roses in his master's garden he was flogged so severely that "for weeks I could hardly walk. My shirt and trousers kept sticking to it" (where he had been cut).

A girl at Cressbrook, Sarah Carpenter, wrote that she saw her brother knocked down by the master carder, Thomas Birks, (Tom the Devil) and jumped upon. "I thought he was dead. He was an hour and never stirred. Nobody ever came to him." Another time Mr Newton "horsewhipped my brother till he was so wealed that he was a shame to be seen". Caroline Thompson was beaten "till she went out of her mind." Betsy Witnough was beaten until she was unable to see because her eyes were so swollen. In the eyes of the girls the worst punishment was reserved for those caught talking to the boys. Their hair was cut off.

First hand evidence of conditions in other factories, comparable to Blincoe's, is more difficult to find. Further complications arise because corporal punishment was accepted as necessary by both adults and children. What we are left with are numerous glimpses of what may have been happening. Factory owner John Fielden wrote that "It was a common tradition in Lancashire that the (apprentices') beds never got cold". Llewellyn Jones, a doctor, wrote of the child workers at the Holywell mill in North Wales that they "were undergrown and their appearance pallid and meagre". In Whitaker and Merryweather's mill in Burley the children worked permanent night shifts. In 1819 inspectors reported about Gorton and Robert's mill in Bolton "Most filthy; no ventilation; the apprentices and other children ragged and puny, not half clothed and seemingly not half fed; no instruction of any kind; no human beings can be more wretched". Finally, Thomas Wood, an engineer, wrote in his autobiography in 1820 "There were no inspectors, no public opinion to put down flagrant cases of oppression, or of cruel usage. Some of the overlookers were brutal beyond what would now be believed. The mortality among millhands was very great. Had a fair record been kept of the doings of some of the overlookers it would more like the doings of a West Indian slave driver than a sober record of English life". An (obviously ineffective) Inspectorate had been set up in 1804.

Perhaps because it was not the done thing to write about such things in those days other forms of abuse are only hinted at. Blincoe spoke of John Needham's treatment of girls, calling them "those unhappy creatures at once the victims of his ferocity and lust". Needham's other two sons, Charles and Frank, lifted the girls' petticoats "out of bravado" to flog them. Sarah Carpenter spoke of Birks, pulling up the clothes of the older girls, 17 or 18 years of age, and throwing them "across his knee and then flog(ging) them with his hand in the sight of both men and boys". An anonymous correspondent to The Lion wrote that "the girls (at Litton)

were frequently prostituted to the carnal lusts of the young masters, who did not scruple to make use of the most base means of screening their infamy". A girl from an unnamed Scottish mill, giving evidence to the Royal Commission in 1832, spoke of being severely beaten when the factory owner "wanted familiarities with her" and she refused. In 1816 the Select Committee criticised Mr Moss of Backbarrow mill for "making too free" with the children. Allegedly "he took a stick and put it to a girl's petticoats, and would heave them up a little, and say, let us see what sort of legs you've got: and I thought he was rather too loose there". Even his wife said that "he was too familiar with some of them". I've found no evidence of the sexual abuse of boys.

Child labour is still with us today. The children of farmers surely still help at harvest time. Boys and girls still have (fewer and fewer) paper rounds. Some must work at weekends, often for cash in hand, and help in the home or with caring. Hopefully the overwhelming majority of these "jobs" are freely chosen. However I have no doubt that some children in the United Kingdom are being exploited in much the same way as Robert Blincoe was in his lifetime. Moreover newspaper exposes and TV documentaries lead us to believe that conditions in the developing world may be much closer to those in England at the end of the eighteenth century than it is comfortable to think about. A recent story in The Week tells of millions of Indian children still working as tea sellers, shoeshine boys, waiters, carpet weavers, cigarette rollers and agricultural labourers. A new law in India fudges the issue by allowing children under the age of 14 to work in non-hazardous domestic enterprises, leaving plenty of room for continuing exploitation. Stories of child sexual abuse and paedophilia, so prevalent in the news today, seem more horrific than any surviving evidence from Blincoe's time. Today trafficking and grooming seem organised on a national or international scale. Perhaps, in Blincoe's time, it was more random and less organised, or more tolerated.

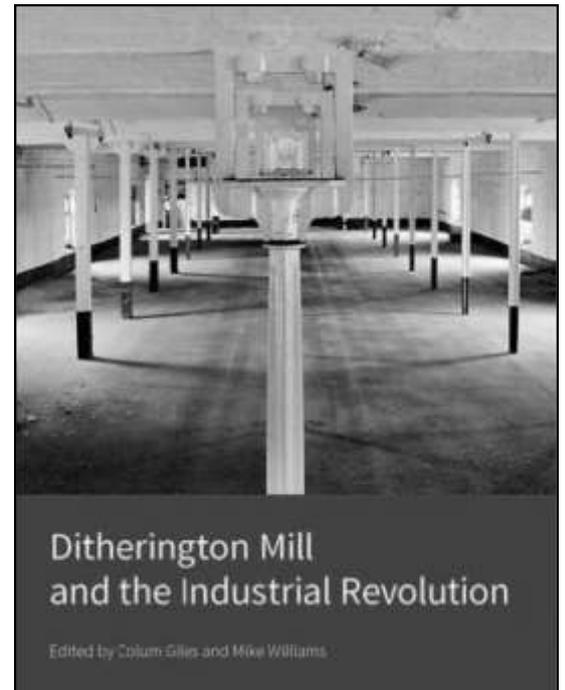
## IA News and Notes

### Ditherington Flaxmill, Shrewsbury

**D**itherington Mill in Shrewsbury is celebrated as being the first iron-framed building in the world, a forerunner of the design that made construction of skyscrapers possible. It was designed by Charles Bage and completed in 1797. Such fireproof designs were to be used within a few years for the rebuilding of Belper North Mill and Walton Bump Mill.

A new book, "Ditherington Mill and the Industrial Revolution" by Colum Giles and Mike Williams has just been published by Historic England (November 2015). This contains results of a considerable amount of archaeological and historical research on methods on the methods of construction. This will be of interest all connected with fireproof construction of industrial buildings.

This new publication comes at the same time as the opening of a new Visitor Centre at the Ditherington Flaxmill Maltings. The use of the site had changed from processing flax to use as a maltings in the late 1800, and the Visitor Centre highlights the impact of the building's revolutionary iron frame on the world of architecture, as well as details of the mill's machinery and technology, and working conditions at the mill, including child labour.



### Industrial Heritage Day EMIAC 90

**T**he Railway and Canal Historical Society are organising the next Industrial Heritage Day/ EMIAC 90 which will be held on Saturday 14 May 2016 at The National Forest Waterside Visitors' Centre Bath Lane, Moira, DE12 6BA.

The subject is to be the Ashby Canal which was built between 1794 and 1804 to serve the eastern basin of the Leicestershire and Derbyshire coalfield. Originally 31 miles long, running from Ashby Wolds to the Coventry Canal at Marston Junction, it continued to serve this purpose until the 1960s, despite being taken over by the Midland Railway Company in 1845. The canal suffered decline and gradual partial closure in the

20th century but the section from Snarestone down to the Coventry Canal remained open and is still navigable today. In recent years much progress has been made in getting the canal restored north of its present terminus by the Quarry Lane Pumping station, near Snarestone.

The day includes talks on *The Ashby Canal and Tramroads* by Dr. Wendy Freer and *The Ashby Canal, decline and restoration* by Geoff Pursglove, and during the afternoon the hosts offer choice of two guided walks to view sites of interest:



1. Walk along the restored canal from The Waterside to Moira Furnace and early 19th century Blast Furnace, now a museum. Visit does not include entry to the museum which costs £2. An easy return walk of two miles along the towpath.
2. Visit to Snarestone Wharf, (off Quarry Lane, by the old pumphouse) to see the length of canal recently restored, part of the abandoned length and what is planned for the future. This will be about a 1.5 mile easy return walk.

This looks like it will be a popular day, and the Registration Form is now available on our NEDIAS website, at our meetings, as well as from Railway and Canal Historical Society. Queries e-mail wild141@talktalk.net

## Chairman's Chat

In 2014, NEDIAS organised an EMIAC industrial heritage conference the theme of which highlighted the industries of the Brampton area. Our walk took delegates to view the listed Walton Bump Mill - a building on **Historic England's "At Risk" register**. There are now brand new proposals on the table from Robinson plc to develop this important site. The Historic England listing for Walton Mill states:

*"The Walton Mill complex is of outstanding interest because of the probably unique and very significant form of construction of two core buildings, but also because of the survival of so much of a large complex, which has evolved over a long period... The 1st and 2nd floors of Building 7 have the same fire-resistant structure as that first employed in Jedediah Strutt's Milford Warehouse of 1792/3 (demolished), one of the first factories with fireproof construction in the world. They are survivals of a proto-fireproofing technique, which by 1796 had been further improved by the substitution of cast iron for the vulnerable timber beams. This is likely to be the only surviving example of such construction. Smith's Foundry ½ mile downstream of the Walton Works were major suppliers of cast-iron components to the Strutts and it is highly likely that the use here arises from that relationship.*

*Building 10 employs a form of "slow burning construction" which became the usual form of construction in American textile mills from about 1820 until their replacement by steel-framed buildings and only 2 such other mills in England are known to employ this form of construction."*

Many of us will remember the guided tour we had through this building, led by Richard Robinson and Dr Pat Strange in 2014, and members will be pleased to hear that there are now sound proposals devised by Robinson plc in conjunction with a Hathersage company a developer which has already completed a number of successful projects in the area. The scheme proposes ground floor retail units in the listed building, with apartments on upper floors, and further housing, retail and leisure sites in the surrounding 25 acres. Perhaps our conference has helped in some small way to highlight the significance of the buildings and the development potential of the site.



Walton works, fireproofing, Building 7



Walton Mill, nationally important, but now derelict awaiting a future.

Our AGM will be held at the March meeting – this is your opportunity to raise any issues, and the Agenda is enclosed in this Newsletter. Looking forward to seeing you then.

## And finally .... .... **coal closures**

*Cliff Lea*

**W**e heard recently that it was to be “AND FINALLY” for Britain's last deep coal mine. Our last remaining deep coal mine closed at Kellingley, bringing to an end an important chapter in the nation's industrial history. Millions of tonnes of coal had been extracted from Kellingley colliery since it began production in North Yorkshire in 1965, and it was one of the largest remaining mines in Europe. It had employed 1,600 at its peak

It means that the only remaining coal mine with a working deep shaft is at the National Coal Mining Museum, down which NEDIAS had a great visit a couple of years ago.

As some of you know, I regularly visit Vancouver Island to catch up with my daughter and her family, and she has just sent me a clipping about the closure of the last coal mine there. On Vancouver Island, coal mining started only in 1850, when the Chief of one of the First Nations tribes turned up with a lump of coal at the newly-opened Hudson Bay Company bastion at Nanaimo. They had spotted that the British were importing coal from England for furnaces, and they showed them where local coal could be found. Within a couple of decades, the coal industry was the prime mover in the expanding economy of Vancouver Island, spawning a network of railway lines, new settlements, fortunes, and influx of immigrants from China and Japan to work the mines. Right up until WW1, Chinese, Japanese and the First Nations themselves were paid half the rate of Europeans as miners - real exploitation.

SO FINALLY the last mine on Vancouver Island is to close. The owners of Quinsam coal mine near Campbell River suspended operations in January, stating the move is in response to a decline in coal prices and market demand. “In so many ways, coal has laid the foundation for the island,” said University of Victoria history Prof. John Lutz. “Between the 1850s and the early 20th century coal was the main economic resource on the island.”



***The fated Kellingley Colliery.***



***The fated Quinsam Coal Mine, Vancouver Island***

*Sounds familiar?*

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### **NEDIAS Committee:**

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