

# North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society



**NEDIAS Newsletter No. 64 – November 2016**  
**Price: £2.00 (Free to Members)**



## Visit to Codnor Castle

Very ably led by Martyn Taylor-Cockayne, NEDIAS had a splendid visit on a sunny Saturday in October to see the remains of Codnor Castle. Martyn led us from Jacksdale, initially past the historic railway site just a few steps from the car park.

We were able to see the signs of the early tramway, built to serve the iron industry. The tramway conveyed coal in horse-drawn wagons from the Portland pits via the Mexborough pits to Jacksdale.

There, the coal was loaded onto barges for transport along the Cromford Canal. There is a good interpretation board in the canal basin, the basin now filled-in but still visible and the unusual tramway embankment made of slag-blocks from the iron foundry. Martyn suggests that the use of slag blocks for such an application could be unique.



The NEDIAS group with slag blocks of Portland Tramway in the background.



The 20-arch Jacksdale GNR railway viaduct, demolished 1974, which crosses both the Portland tramway with its slag block embankments, and the earlier Midland Railway line.

The Midland Railway came to the site in 1845 and later in 1875 came the Great Northern Railway, cutting a track through Jacksdale with an enormous twenty arch viaduct. High on top of the viaduct was 'Selston & Codnor Park Station', later named 'Jacksdale & Codnor Park'. The viaduct was demolished in 1974, long after the Station had been axed in the great railway execution.

The Portland basin was connected to the main line of the Cromford canal via a miniature aqueduct, now demolished, over the (canalised) River Erewash.

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It was then on to the overgrown Pinxton branch of the Cromford Canal, walking past a large “winding” point for turning the direction of narrow boats. We had a diversion into the wood to view the outline and footings of the engine house of a Butterley steam engine, which had been one of the targets for Martyn’s walk earlier in the year.



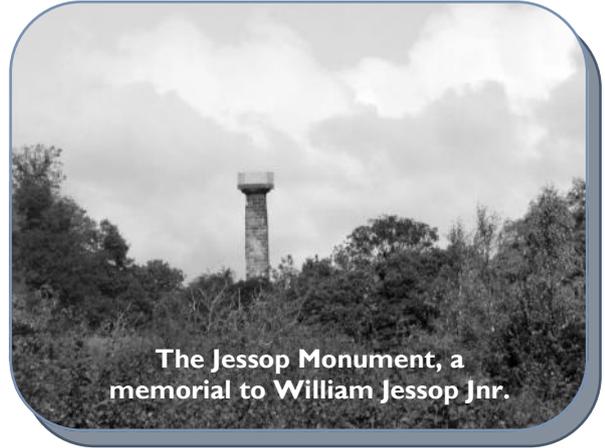
Site of Engine House

We carried on up the hill towards Codnor Castle which could just be seen on the horizon. The site and adjacent farmhouse are open on the second Sunday of each month, and there was quite a bit of activity in

evidence. *En route* we were also able to discern the Jessop Monument in the far distance. The monument was erected in 1854 to the memory of William Jessop Jnr. 1784-1852. He had been an active partner in the Butterley Company for many years. His father (also called William) was one of the founding members of the company. The monument was raised by Public subscription at a cost of £700 and Mr Francis Wright, of Osmaston Manor, laid the first stone on October 9th 1854.

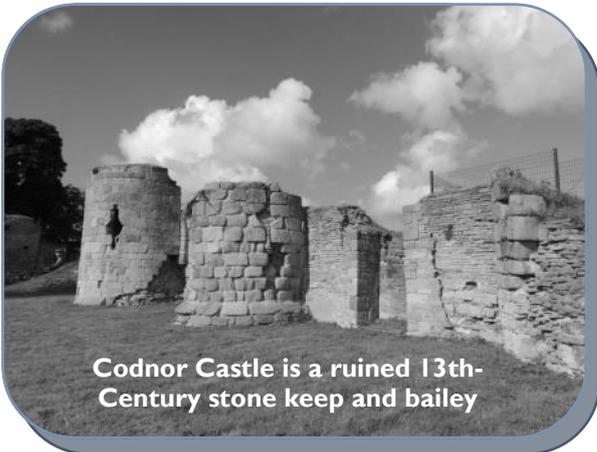


The weeded-up Cromford Canal, Pinxton Branch close to Jacksdale (“I see no ships!”)



The Jessop Monument, a memorial to William Jessop Jnr.

Codnor Castle is a ruined 13th-century stone keep and bailey fortress. The land around Codnor came under the jurisdiction of William Peverel after the Norman Conquest, and the present fragmentary remains represent a three-storey keep and a strong curtain wall and ditch, flanked by round towers. The outer bailey is on a lower level and was constructed at a later period. It originally had a deep moat. On the west side there was a courtyard that was strongly fortified by round towers, which had battlements. In other parts of the ruins there is evidence that the outer walls had loopholes included to allow use by bowmen.



Codnor Castle is a ruined 13th-Century stone keep and bailey

By 1211 it was owned by Henry de Grey, a descendant of the Norman knight Anchetil de Greye. Henry’s descendants include a long line of Lords Grey of Codnor. After the Greys, the castle moved into the hands of the Zouche family for the next two hundred years until they sold up and emigrated to Virginia in 1634.

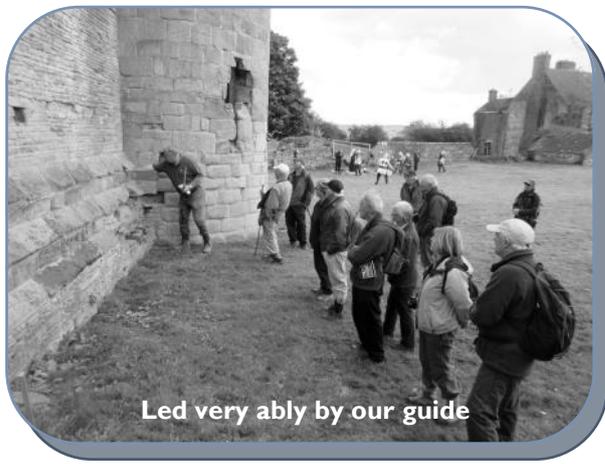
The last person to actually live there is reported to be Sir Streynsham Master, High Sheriff of Derbyshire, who bought the Codnor Castle estate in 1692. He lived there until his death in 1724.



Our visit coincided with rehearsal for a battle re-enactment. I’m glad to say the NEDIAS group came away unscathed



After a picnic

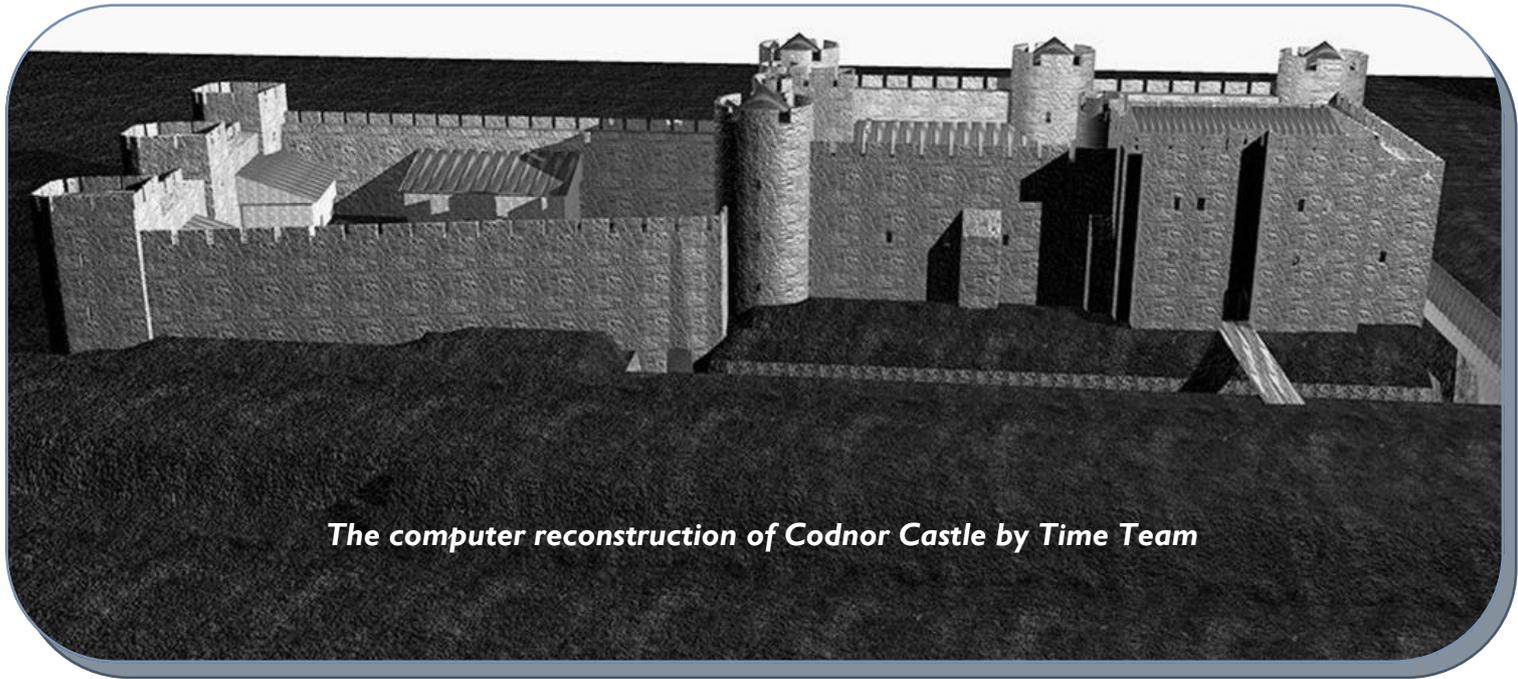


Led very ably by our guide

lunch supported by tea and coffee from the farmhouse (care of Codnor Castle Heritage Trust) Martyn led us on a fact filled tour of the site. Members will recall that some years ago in 2007 there had been a Time Team dig at the site, there is a great display in the farmhouse of photos taken during the dig.

Perhaps the most spectacular find was of a perfectly preserved gold noble of Henry IV, found in the moat and now displayed at Derby Museum and Art Gallery.

*Photos: Liz Carr, Cliff Lea.*



*The computer reconstruction of Codnor Castle by Time Team*

## 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, 12th December 2016	Christmas Meeting
Monday, 9th January 2017	Mike Spick: "Up the cut on the Sheffield Canal"
Monday, 13th February 2017	Barry Knight: "The Milestones of Leather Making"
Monday, 13th March 2017	AGM
Monday, 10th April 2107	David Hulse: "Francis Thompson"
Monday, 8th May 2017	<b>DAVID WILMOT MEMORIAL LECTURE</b> Les Nixon: "West Yorkshire through to South Yorkshire"

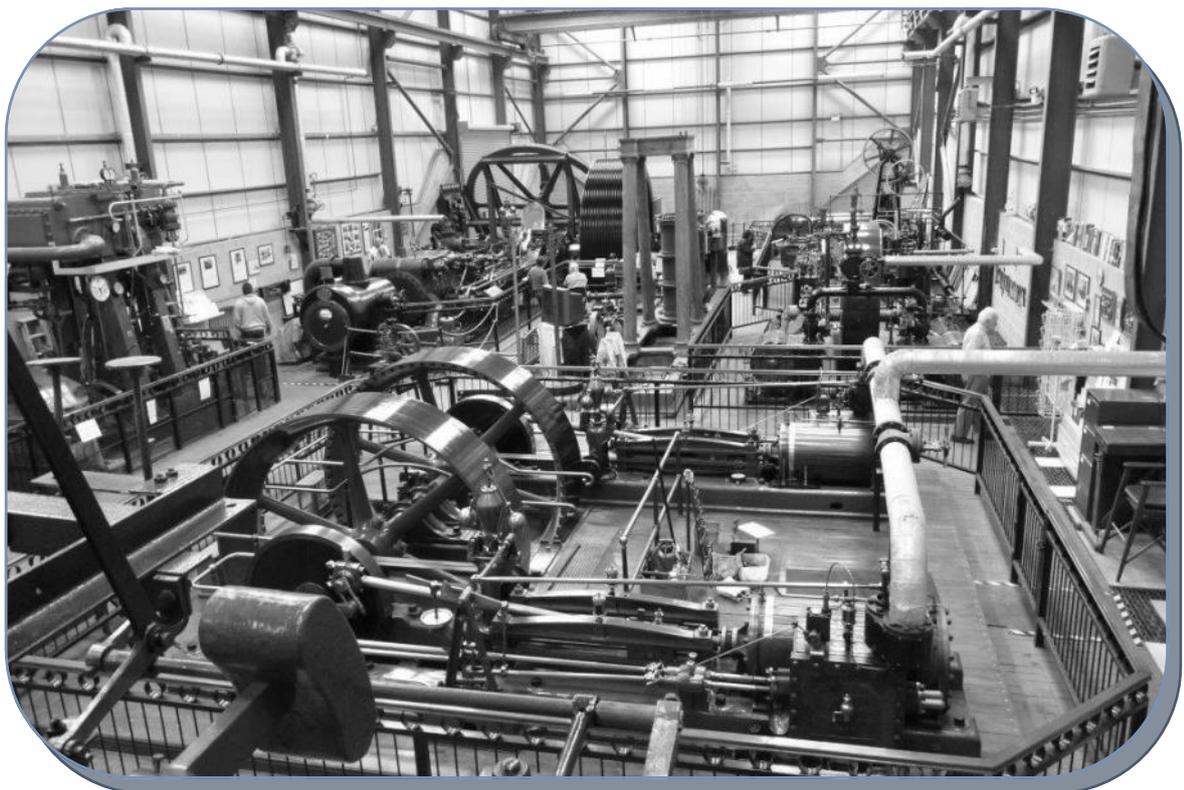
## Other Diary Dates

Saturday, 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2016	South Yorkshire Archaeology Day. <b>10:00am-4:30pm</b> . Showroom Cinema, Paternoster Row, Sheffield. Booking forms at <a href="http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/syas">www.sheffield.gov.uk/syas</a>
Monday, 21 <sup>st</sup> November 2016	<b>“James Brindley – canal pioneer”</b> by Christine Richardson. SYIHS meeting, Kelham Island Museum, <b>7:30pm</b> . £2 for non-members.
Saturday, 3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2016	The re-launch of <b>Chesterfield &amp; District Civic Society</b> . Public meeting at The Saints Meeting Room, close to Chesterfield Parish Church. <b>10:30am</b>
Monday, 12 <sup>th</sup> December 2016	<b>“Ganister, the forgotten industry”</b> by Graham Shepherd. SYIHS meeting, Kelham Island Museum, <b>7:30pm</b> . £2 for non-members.
Saturday, 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2017	<b>Derbyshire Archaeology Day</b> at Pomegranate Theatre, Chesterfield
Tuesday, 21 <sup>st</sup> February 2017	<b>“The Brunels’ Thames Tunnel – a great legacy to modern tunnelling”</b> by Prof. Lord (Robert) Mair. SYIHS meeting. <b>5:30pm for 6:00pm</b> at the Holiday Inn Royal Victoria Hotel, Sheffield
Wednesday, 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2017	<b>Talk: Building History</b> . From maps and plans to census records, and tithes to old photos and artwork. A review of local sources of information about local heritage and old buildings. Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock. More information 01629 538347 and <a href="http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/recordoffice">www.derbyshire.gov.uk/recordoffice</a> . <b>10:00am—12:00 noon</b> .
Saturday, 6 <sup>th</sup> May 2017	<b>“Cromford Threads”</b> – EMIAC Industrial Heritage Day at Cromford Mill organised by NEDIAS. More details later, put this date in your diary now.

## Markham Grange Steam Museum

*Visit led by David Palmer*

Our first visit of the new season took place on 14th September when we went to the Markham Grange Steam Museum north west of Doncaster. They have a well-maintained collection of around 18 steam engines and pumps, which they steam on Wednesdays and some Sundays. Search out their website for lots more detail about the collection.



## More on Bugatti, and a Trebor connection (and confection)

**John Rowland**

Following the item on Bugatti and his autos in the last Newsletter, John Rowland adds:

Some may think that Bugatti is rather outside the remit of North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society. ABSOLUTELY NOT! The Works Superintendent of Trebor Mints in Chesterfield, John Marks, had a Bugatti Type 51, and competed with it at Prescott Hill and elsewhere.

Sadly, Trebor was engulfed by Cadbury in 1989, but before this, Trebor did a special run of Bugatti Mints, with the famous 1924 Bugatti aluminium alloy wheel embossed on each one! I bought heaps of 'em! Alas, all consumed or handed out, and I didn't save a wrapper!

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/9753698/John-Marks.html>

You can see John Mark's obituary – he died in 2012 – in the above link to the Daily Telegraph, and more details of the company in the book "The Trebor Story" by Matthew Crampton, Published by Muddler Books, 2012, ISBN 10: 0956136117 / ISBN 13: 9780956136114

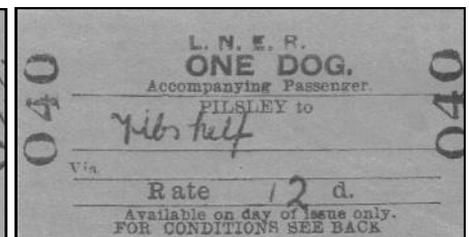
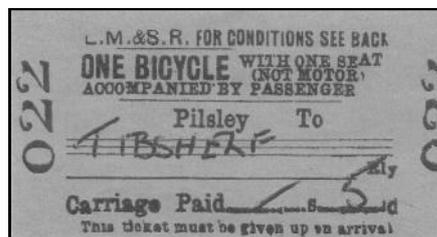


John Marks at the wheel of T55 Bugatti

## A Ticket to Tibshelf

**Glynn Waite**

Here's an interesting conundrum for passengers travelling between Pilsley and Tibshelf. How come these two tickets are issued by L.M.&S.R. and also L.N.E.R. Answers at the members' meeting in December!



## Notes from Northumbria

**Derek Grindell**

Our annual family sojourn to the north east this year saw us heading up the A1 to the Port of Blyth on Monday 29th August. The town had been chosen to host the North Sea Tall Ships Regatta, a four day event, which had commenced the previous Thursday. Organised by *Sail Training International* it was hosted by Blyth Town Council in close cooperation with Northumberland County Council, who in turn were in partnership with the Port of Blyth, supported financially by Arts Council England. Their grant of £120k enabled an extensive cultural programme, involving partners, individuals and community groups to be organised and the first three nights to culminate with firework displays.

The town of Blyth has a distinctly Victorian feel to its town centre but this is deceptive since the port facilities themselves are kept busy, handling imports and exports. Overlooking the southern beach, there is a large plant devoted to the development of large wind turbines. One such unit, towering over the river Blyth and overlooking the 'Tall Ships', provided a reminder of two methods, ancient and modern, of man's success in harnessing the wind's energy (Fig.1). Newcastle University has a research



Fig.1 Harnessing the Wind - Ancient & Modern Methods

centre at North Port Gate and the Charles Parsons Research Centre is located at the north end of the Quayside (Fig.2).

There were seventeen competing vessels at anchor alongside the river Blyth's Commissioners and Dun Cow Quays and four more in the sea off North Quay. If our experience of the dense crowds on all three quays, awaiting the departure of the 'Tall Ships', was any guide, the county and local authorities had been singularly successful in stimulating the interest of their ratepayers as well as attracting casual visitors like ourselves.



Fig.2 The 'Charles Parsons Technology Centre'



Fig.3 Fergusons - The First Truck (1926)

The event's main sponsors, Fergusons Transport, the largest privately owned heavy goods haulier in the North East, were celebrating their 90th year in business and the centre of attraction in their special enclosure was the firm's first vehicle, a 'Bean truck' (Fig. 3), a type of small commercial vehicle. Now restored 'in house' to a high standard at the firm's Cramlington H.Q., it was acquired in 1926 by Matt Ferguson, a miner with no appetite for the General Strike. It was funded by mortgaging the family home and first used to deliver parcels. When a customer offered a pig carcass in lieu of cash, Matt decided that parcel deliveries between Blyth and Newcastle could be supplemented by providing a house removal service. The pig was salted and kept in the bath to feed the family.

In 1955, when site works on Blyth's coal-fired Power Station started, the family business then moved into warehousing by providing storage facilities for the plant and construction materials. The Generating Station was decommissioned in 2001 and demolished shortly afterwards. Fergusons sponsored 14 young people to participate in the 'Tall Ships' race to Gothenburg as sail trainees.

The largest 'Tall Ship', by far, was the Polish *Dar Młodzieży*, with an overall length of 108.81 m. and masts 62.1 m. tall, her home port is Gdynia. The *Fryderyk Chopin*, also Polish, has an overall length of 52.84 m. and is based at Szczecin, whilst the *Lord Nelson*, the 'flagship' for the Jubilee Sailing Trust's mission to encourage the disabled to sail, has an overall length of 48.55 m. Built in 1985, its home port is Hartlepool. Norway's representative was *Christian Radich*, which was built in 1937 and has an overall length of 71.73m. Much photographed, she is based at Oslo and has a stunning profile when under full sail.



Fig.4 'Shtandart' Heading for Gothenburg

The most interesting vessel to naval historians must surely have been 'Shtandart' (Fig.4), which is based in St. Petersburg. Built in 1999 by its owner and Captain Vladimir Martus, it is a replica of the 1703 frigate built by Peter the Great in 1703. Despite it being a minor warship by British standards it was the capital ship of the early Russian Navy. Its keel was laid down on 24th March 1703 and the vessel was launched in the same year on the 22nd August. Its dimensions were 83.5 ft. x 22.3ft. x 8.35 ft. and its armaments comprised 18/20 x 6 pounders on the main deck and an estimated 10/8 x 3 pounders on the fo'c'sle and quarter decks. The lower and upper gun ports were adorned with carved oak-leaf wreaths and the top mast carried a spritsail. The wreaths were common features at the time but were being phased out elsewhere. In England their use was officially discontinued in the year of *Shtandart's* launch.

An early example of Admiralty economies?

Green timber was used on *Shtandart's* gun deck, which is believed to have been covered. In September it sailed to St. Petersburg and cruised in the Baltic in 1705-9. From 5-10 June 1705 it operated with Vice

Admiral Kruys' squadron, exchanging fire with Swedish ships in defence of Kronstadt. Found unfit in 1709 it was repaired but not relaunched until 4 July 1711. During 1712–13 *Shtandart* cruised in the Baltic but was placed on Harbour duties in 1714. In 1725 it was brought ashore as a memorial but broken up in 1730.

In mid-afternoon, one by one, the tall ships moved slowly along the river Blyth, past the lighthouse at the pier end and headed for Gothenburg under a blue sky watched by thousands on Blyth's beaches. The procession of sail was recorded for posterity by thousands of cameras and phones.

A curious feature of Blyth's sea front are WW1 Searchlights (Fig.5), which were commissioned in WW1 and are now preserved and tended by a local preservation group. The case for their installation was made by three German warships shelling Scarborough, Whitby and Hartlepool on the morning of Wednesday, 16 December 1914, the first time British civilians had been in the line of enemy fire during a major conflict since the Civil War. The *Seydlitz*, *Moltke* and *Blucher*, led by Vice Admiral Hipper, approached the coastline. The warships had been met further out at sea by the British destroyers, *Doon*, *Test*, *Waveney* and *Moy* but they failed to stop the German incursion of home waters. The light cruiser HMS *Patrol* and submarine *C9* attempted to intervene but both ran aground.



Fig.5 WWI Searchlight at Blyth

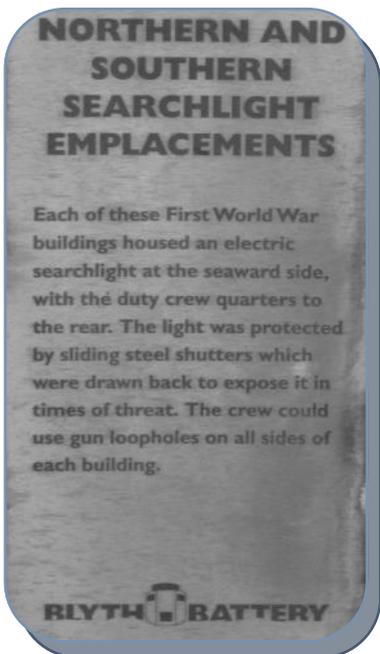


Fig.6 Searchlight Notice

The residents of Hartlepool were unaware of events at sea and the imminent danger in which they were now placed. Shortly after 8:00am the three warships began shelling, continuing to do so for about 40 minutes.

The coastal defence guns, comprising the Heugh Battery with 2 x 6 inch guns and the Lighthouse battery, which had one 6 inch gun were the main target and the lines of communication were quickly disrupted. The coastal batteries, manned by the Durham Royal Garrison Artillery, fired 123 rounds. Two companies from the 18th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry were also stationed in Hartlepool at this time. A degree of damage was inflicted on the German warship *Blucher* and some of the crew were killed and injured but, despite efforts to defend the town, not surprisingly, the two batteries were outgunned by the German warships.

Over 1,000 shells were fired during the bombardment causing much devastation to the town and its people. More than 100 people were killed and in excess of 200 were injured. Many buildings were damaged or destroyed. Similar, although less successful raids were made on Whitby and Scarborough and the incidents had an enormous effect upon British public opinion, both as a rallying cry against Germany for an attack upon civilians, and in generating criticism of the Royal Navy for being unable to prevent it.



Fig.7 Clinker Built Fishing Coble

The small town of Newbiggin by the Sea, only a short drive to the north of Blyth, gained a degree of national fame in 1868 by being the terminal of the first telegraph cable across the North Sea, which was laid from Jutland, Denmark. The Lifeboat Station dates from 1851, following the loss of ten local fishermen in stormy seas, and is the oldest operational station in the British Isles. During this period the town has had 13 different lifeboats and currently operates an inshore 'Atlantic 85' vessel. Over the years local crews have been awarded 16 gallantry awards.

The former Heritage Centre has been replaced by the Newbiggin Maritime Centre at a cost of £3 million,

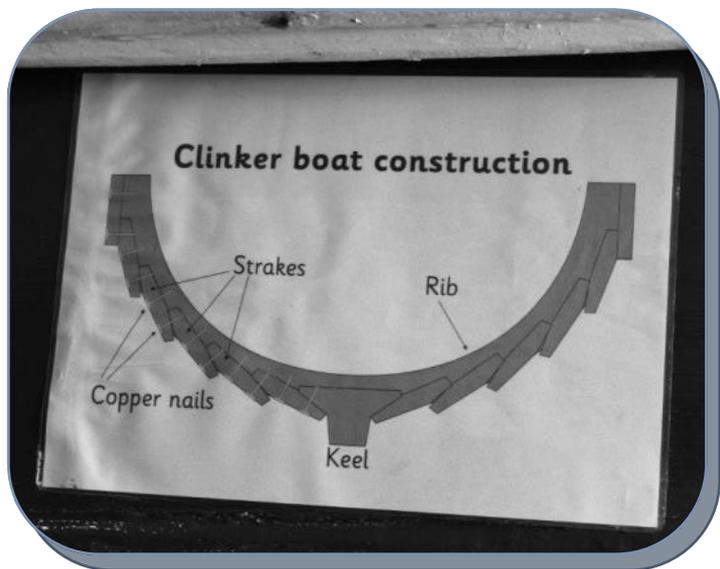


Fig. 8 Cross Section of a Clinker Built Coble

which celebrates the local connection with the sea and features a modern former lifeboat and a clinker built coble (Figs.7 & 8), which was once a common sight along the North Sea coast as far south as Flamborough.

A £10 million scheme to restore and improve Newbiggin's beach, which had suffered serious erosion has recently been completed. It involved removing 500,000 tonnes of sand from Skegness and delivering it on site from the trailing suction hopper dredger *Oranje*. It was delivered onto the beach via a pipe 1 m. in diameter. A new offshore breakwater on the opposite side of the bay was installed to match the one on the opposite end of the bay. Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, apart from now having a beach sourced in Lincolnshire, has the longest promenade in the county, which each spring and autumn, provides a

perfect vantage point for naturalists to watch the migratory passage of the North Sea bird population.

### Bibliography

- (1) *Russian Warships in the Age of Sail 1696-1860 Design, Construction, Careers and Fates* by John Tredrea & Eduard Sozaev. It was first published in Great Britain in 2010 by Seaforth Publishing, an imprint of Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 47 Church street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS.
- (2) The Journal (Wed. August 17, 2016) published by Fergusons

## Chairman's Chat

**Cliff Lea**

As we approach the 2016 year end, on reflection I can see that this year has been quite a busy one for NEDIAS. There has been considerable activity at the Wingerworth dig, but the end of the year sees the winding-up of this operation. One of the participants mentioned that there is a certain sadness to see earth now returning to bury again the remnants of the surviving structure, and of course the next part of the exercise is to record and publish what has been discovered during this classic archaeological dig. This year we have also been on quite a number of members' visits, to see the Markham Grange Steam Museum; to be led on two walks from Jacksdale across remnants of Butterley Engineering, the sites of engine shed, the complex rail and canal interchange at Jacksdale and over to Codnor Castle; the visit behind the scenes at Chesterfield Museum; and our classic canal day to celebrate the tercentenary of the birth of James Brindley.

Our last meeting of 2016 is for members only, and we have a few interesting "goings on". These will include an item from Darrell Clark, a short video clip and details of the background of a wheel pit excavation and very clever digital reconstruction, as well as our Christmas quiz. We will also have a raffle for two free tickets for use on the North York Moors Railway! If I don't see you there, please accept my best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

## IA News and Notes

## NEDIAS on Facebook

If you haven't yet seen our Facebook page, even if you don't participate in Facebook yourself, you can see all the details at <https://www.facebook.com/nediaschesterfield/>. Every few weeks Les Mather adds another item, and it's looking really good, with great information and interesting snippets and photos. Don't miss it – look for "nediaschesterfield" by Googling [www.facebook.com/nediaschesterfield](https://www.facebook.com/nediaschesterfield)

## **Volunteer activity at NYMR Motive Power Depot – see the Newsletter Supplement**

Look out for the Special Supplement to this Newsletter – it contains a great article with lashings of colour photographs following the activity of a volunteer at the North York Moors Railway Motive Power Depot. The NYMR Supplement is available at NEDIAS meetings, cost £3or £4.50 with postage if you can't collect from our meeting. The author, Graham Swift has kindly allowed us to publish his super article as a special edition.

## **NEDIAS Journal Volume 6 – out now!**

Just published is the latest 100-page edition of NEDIAS Journal. This edition contains articles on Staveley Works by Ron Presswood, Chesterfield Trolleybuses by Philip Cousins, Brunton's Engine House at Butterley by Martyn Taylor Cockayne, Boulton & Paul Ltd. by Derek Grindell, and Riddings Oil Refinery by Cliff Lea. Members can purchase copies at our meetings, at the very special price of just £3. A great reduction on the Non-Members cost price of £8 plus postage.

## **Dronfield Hall Barn**

***Jean Kendal***

It is now six months since the Barn opened as a Heritage , Arts and Education Centre. The Old Dronfield Society became the first full partner to join the Trust, followed by The Wildlife & Natural History Group, Arts@S18, Arts at the Barn, Friends of DHB, Dronfield Botanical Illustration group and Gardens at the Barn. A full programme of events going into 2017 can be found on [www.dronfieldhallbarn.org](http://www.dronfieldhallbarn.org)

Other local groups have formed an association with the Barn, e.g. The Rotary are furthering the development of their "Round Dronfield Walk" and the Leabrook Valley Group have produced a leaflet illustrating a new shorter walk. Of particular interest to historians might be the 1:8 scale model of the original manor house (1430s) as envisaged by Stanley Jones, a project in collaboration with Eckington School. Henry Fanshawe School pupils are currently performing at local events a short play based on the "Poor Old Horse" calendar custom. It will be performed in Dronfield in the lead-up to Christmas. Our artist in residence, John Sutcliffe, will be lighting up the front of the Barn in his wonderful light projection show, using, among other material, items from the ODS archive.

February will bring Maureen Taylor's historical costume exhibition and in March, the research group will be presenting an exhibition focussing on High Street and the yards off it, highlighting the buildings and the families who lived and worked there in the years between 1841 and 1911.

Coming soon, on November 24, Cliff Lea will be giving a talk on Derbyshire's Oil Industry.

I must mention too that the Barn has an excellent café. Free unlimited parking is available on the right of the entrance to Sainsbury, or behind the library, or behind the Sports Centre off Gosforth Lane.



## North Wingfield Station

**N**orth Wingfield is the only surviving station pavilion building of Francis Thompson. It was upgraded last year by EH from Grade II to II\*, and is on the County's Buildings at Risk register. It's also listed by the Victoria Society within the top ten list of most threatened buildings in the UK.



Built in 1840, it is a single storey ashlar building in Georgian style with overhanging eaves. The station name was carved in gilt lettering on the facade, around an ornamental clock. It was closed in 1967 and is in poor condition. Christian Barman, who wrote one of the first studies of railway architecture, called it 'the most perfect of all station houses'.

Does anyone with their ear to the ground know what the latest position is?

## Possible Re-launch of Chesterfield and District Civic Society – Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2016

**E**very town needs a Civic Society. They serve a number of very worthwhile functions, and are very different animals to the usual local heritage or history societies such as NEDIAS. They are voluntary bodies which aim to represent the needs of a local community. They often campaign for high standards of planning of new buildings or traffic schemes, they may identify and lobby for conservation of historic buildings, and may present awards for good standards. At the very least they may encourage local landscaping, "best kept village" clean-ups, bulb planting, and other community help-schemes.

Importantly, the best Civic Societies aim to have a voice at the planning level in their community, help to encourage the building and conservation of all that is perceived to be good, and have a loud voice to counter planning that might detract from the ambience of the area. Very difficult to define, but one thing's for sure - they imperceptibly have a positive affect in helping to make our home towns better places in which to live and work. A good idea?

Chesterfield and District Civic Society has been in existence for about 50 years, and it was the needs of that time that galvanised its formation and steeled the community in its fight to discourage a plan for typical 1960s redevelopment of the market place. What was finally achieved was agreed by all as a great credit to the town, and the resulting development won many awards. Over the years it has been involved with and encouraged many other activities: the award-winning conservation of the Eyre Chapel, funding for reinstatement of railings around the Crooked Spire church, the town centre conservation area, public landscaping, the Stephenson's statue at the station. Most people in the town are usually only aware of the Civic Society for its commemorative blue plaques, but with a little reflection we can see the many other areas where their encouragement has helped to improve the town as it's taken a seismic shift from its heavy industrial background. A force for good, and it's done great things so far.

But the last decade has shown a gradual falling-off in those prepared to pick up the banner to take the group forward, and you may have seen the letter recently in the Derbyshire Times calling for active involvement if the group is to be saved. Philip Riden has responded to that request, has joined the Society and is now Acting Chairman. There is shortly to be a Special General Meeting to see if a decision that has already been made to wind up the Society can be rescinded. This meeting and its decision will have been taken by the time you see this Newsletter.

Assuming this is successful, there will be a public meeting to re-launch the Society - it's on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2016 @ 10:30am at the Saints Parish Centre, St Mary's Gate, right next to the Crooked Spire. This meeting is open to all, it will outline its new plans for the future, and I can tell you, the note is very positive. Firm plans, new energy and new ideas to take the group forward in the very spirit that set it off fifty years ago.

There are in NEDIAS a number of people who are long-standing Civic Society members, including those who have and do serve on the Civic Society committee. NEDIAS wish them a successful re-launch – do come to the meeting on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December to hear more.

**And finally ....**

**.... *Preservation of a colliery headstock***

***Cliff Lea***

**W**e were on Vancouver Island this summer, catching up with our daughter's family and our two Canadian grandsons. Katie usually manages to find some sites of industrial interest for me to visit, and this year was no exception. She introduced us to the site of an old coal mine, Morden Colliery, now under stabilisation and preservation by the local Morden Mine Historical Society. See [www.mordenmine.com](http://www.mordenmine.com).

What's this about coal on Vancouver Island you might wonder?

When Hudson's Bay Company first established a post on the island in 1849, the traders looked to see what resources apart from furs and timber could be traded. The local First Nations people had noted the use of coal by their new "invaders" in their forges, and chief of the Snuneymuxw tribe brought a sample of coal to Fort Victoria, showed the Hudson Bay Company where it could be found. The rest is history – coal mining on the island became a major industry which was to endure particularly along the east coast of Vancouver Island for 100 years. For those of you that have taken the cruise from Vancouver to Alaska through the "inside passage", that's the part of the great Island you can just see away to the west during the first few hundred miles as you head northwards to the icy wastes.

These days you can visit Vancouver Island and not even notice the occasional signs of long defunct pit sites, colliery sidings, and small ports where the coal had been transhipped onto boats or even the beehive coke ovens blending back into the landscape. The Island is now very much the must-see beautiful and "wacky" holiday area, great beaches, rocky coves, wonderful views, great fishing, ancient forests, mountains, winter skiing and all.

But there are one or two interesting sites accessible. This year we went to the site of the Morden Colliery where excavation for the black stuff had commenced in 1912. It took over a year to dig the two shafts when on April 19th 1913, at a depth of 600 feet, they located an eight-foot seam. Rail line was laid and coal port created.



Coal Cars at Morden Tipple,  
courtesy BC Archives H-06571

decided to use what at the time was a new material available to them. It was to be built of fire-proof, long-lasting reinforced concrete. And where did the cement come from? It came from a new cement plant near Victoria; this was a cement site that has now disappeared, but which blossomed when the site was transformed to become the famous Butchart Gardens – a spectacular colourful garden that is on the schedule of every visitor to Vancouver Island!

And the Morden Colliery – it was not a success despite its splendid headstock. The strike came at the wrong time and the owners filed for bankruptcy in 1921 leaving a mountain of debts.

But the finding of the coal at Morden coincided with an Island-wide strike by the miners, a strike that was to last for over a year and which halted all underground work. So the company decided to take their time over erection of headstock and "tippler" which loaded the coal to rail wagons.

At that time on the island, headstocks and associated structures would have been built of wood or steel, but they



The Morden Colliery site gradually being absorbed by the rapidly growing forest undergrowth

But the headstock and tippie remained, the reinforced concrete ensured its longevity, and ensured also that because it wasn't of steel construction there was no metal of any value for scrap that could be scavenged.

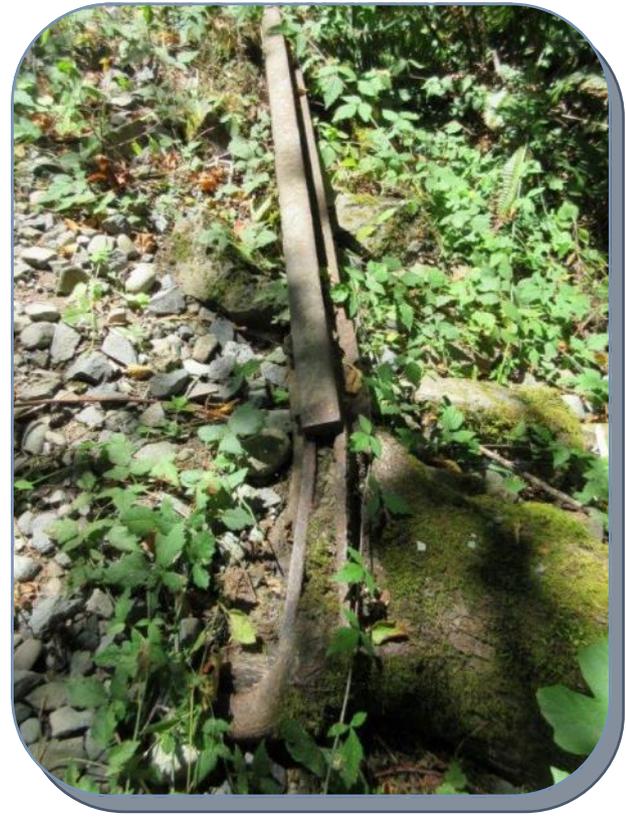
The Morden Mine Historical Society are doing all they can to ensure stability and a future. Since vegetation grows fast and strong on Vancouver Island, it's a never ending struggle simply to keep down the vegetation, and guess what, they have used goats in their struggle. A clever use of another natural resource that has a voracious appetite for vegetation, stripping the land as quickly as piranhas strip flesh.

The Society rented 11 goats to clear the site and to keep it free of vegetation in July of this year. A nifty solution which has proved most effective – when Christine and I visited the site in August, the area around the headstock within the security enclosure was close-cropped and allowed excellent views.



Goats on duty at Morden Mine, July 2016 – picture Nanaimo News Bulletin

**With tongue-in-cheek, is this a solution which might be of interest to Pleasley Pit? It could certainly have been of interest to the N E D I A S archaeology team when they had first started work at the current Wingerworth stone saw mill dig!**



There are still signs of the pit railway for those who hunt around

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