

North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society

Newsletter No. 7 – August 2002



Editorial

Events past, present and future predominate in this issue, with a **very** busy programme of summer visits in progress and a stimulating programme of talks for this coming era of the darker nights. With a blue sky outside and a temperature in the upper twenties, this is no time to sit at a computer indoors nor is it proper to utter that word associated with the next solstice!

Your Editor also hopes that readers will therefore forgive the paucity of articles in this issue, given the need to concentrate on dispelling any tendency towards inertia and getting members, friends and all interested parties acquainted with our next events. Not that there is any reason to think that, come the day, people will not be forthcoming.

From small beginnings in February 2000, attendance at our meetings has gone from strength to strength. The David Hey lecture, with **over seventy people in the room**, did stretch resources and we apologise for the cramped conditions which ensued. Perhaps there will come a time when we outgrow our existing premises but, meanwhile, we will need to take steps to avoid a recurrence. We anticipate a high interest in November's talk by Christine Richardson so feel the need to control the numbers of seats available. By this means, those present should enjoy a reasonable level of comfort. Members will have priority but visitors will, of course, also be welcome to apply for seats. Those attending the September and October talks will be invited to place their names and contact details on lists which will enable the Committee to allocate places, depending upon demand.

Before then, we still have the last outdoor event of this season, the visit to High Rake and Magpie mines. This should be an interesting day, with the chance to see the surface remains of a site which is currently being archaeologically excavated and another which, by dint of much restoration work, has a well-preserved array of surface buildings. We hope to assist your interpretation of the sites on the day by the guidance of experts from work at each place. A separate leaflet describing the arrangements is included in this mailing. For more details, please contact Paul Smith, the leader of our Field Study Group.

Finally, an appeal once more for articles for inclusion in the next Newsletter. It would be very good to have a selection of writings for the November issue from a variety of sources. Whether your research on your subject is complete or still being developed, why not write a few lines to describe it to our readership?

Who knows, it may well bring out more information on your subject from sources you had not realised existed! Come on, share it with us!

David Wilmot

Summer Programme, 2002 (last remaining visit of season)

Saturday 7th September – Guided tour of High Rake Mine & Magpie Mine surface remains. A mid-morning to mid-afternoon visit, by cars, to these two fascinating sites. Transport and car-sharing can be arranged. Details are given in the leaflet enclosed with this Newsletter. To enlist, or for more information, please contact Paul Smith on 01246 237069.

Lecture Programme, 2002/2003

The venue for each meeting is the **Friends Meeting House, Ashgate Road, Chesterfield** (junction of Brockwell Lane). The meetings are held in the Social Room on the lower floor, reached from the Ashgate Road entrance, **starting at 7.30pm**. Visitors will be asked for a donation of £1 for each meeting while, from September 2002, the talks will be free to NEDIAS members.

Monday 9 September, 2002:

Mervyn Allcock: History and Restoration of Barrow Hill Round House. Mervyn has been a key figure in saving from dereliction this surviving and operative locomotive round house; he will describe its history, rescue and future.

Monday 14 October, 2002:

Mary Smedley: Belper North Mill. This historic building has many stories, as the earliest fireproof cotton mill, as an unwitting springboard for the American textile industry, and as one of the most important surviving but key parts of Strutt's Belper.

Monday 11 November, 2002:

Members Priority: Christine Richardson: Construction and Restoration of Chesterfield Canal. The history of planning and construction by Brindley and Varley of the Chesterfield Canal epitomises the conflicts facing many similar ventures around the country.

Monday 9 December, 2002:

Mike Kennedy: Conservation and Re-Use of Old Industrial Buildings Michael as Chief Planning Officer for Chesterfield will briefly outline the planner's role, opening the meeting to discussion and questions in respect of old industrial buildings

Monday 13 January, 2003

Dr Lynn Willies: Lead Mining and Smelting in the Peak District. Lynn has long association with the Matlock Mining Museum, the Peak District Mines Historical Society and extensive knowledge of the history of mining and conversion of the ores in this area.

Monday 10 February, 2003.

Peter Hawkins: Early Days of Markham's. Those who have heard talks by Peter before will recognise that this presentation will reveal a wealth of fascinating and sound information from detailed research

Monday 10 March, 2003.

AGM followed by Chairman's Lecture:

David Wilmot: Workers' Housing – Beneficence or Bondage. Many examples of housing built by employers for their workers survive in the area, a monument to rapid industrial growth and entrepreneurial activity. David will explore the two sides to this seemingly benevolent coin.

Monday 14 April, 2003.

Roger Shelley: The Derby Silk Mill. Roger, as Curator at the Derby Industrial Museum, is no stranger to this part of Derbyshire having been asst curator at Chesterfield Museum. He will describe the restoration and use of this important and early silk mill as an industrial museum.

Monday 12 May 2003.

Barry Knight: Clayton's Tannery. Clayton's are one of the country's last surviving traditional tanneries. Barry will cover its 150 year history and position as a specialist leather producer.

Other NEDIAS Events

Monday 21st October, 7.30pm, Chesterfield Community Centre, Tontine Road, Chesterfield (off Markham Road) – Field Study Group – Discussion on projects in hand or proposed – all welcome.

(Provisional) Monday 16th December – Members' Christmas Gathering, with suitable refreshments. Details still being arranged but pencil the date in your diaries now!

Other Events of IA Interest

10th to 31st August (Monday-Saturdays, 11am to 4pm), The Peacock Centre, Lower Pavement, Chesterfield – An exhibition by Peter and Maeve Hawkins on the history of the Markham Company. The exhibition was spotlighted in the Derbyshire Times of 8th August and is already attracting a great deal of interest. Definitely one event not to be missed, whether familiar with Markhams already or wanting more information ready for Peter's talk to NEDIAS next February!

Monday 26th August – Derby Industrial Museum – George Fletcher's 1850s "Grasshopper" beam engine will be in steam, 2pm-4pm. Test running of the museum's 0-gauge Midland Railway Company inspired model railway is also scheduled to take place on the same afternoon.

Saturday & Sunday, 7th & 8th September – Pleasley Pit Open Weekend – Admission Free – View the restoration work of the last twelve months (10am to 4pm each day).

Saturday & Sunday, 14th & 15th September – Heritage Open Days – SYIHS, Wortley Top Forge – Free admission on Saturday, normal charges on Sunday.

WEA, Hurst House, Abercrombie Street, Chesterfield – Wednesday afternoons, commencing 18th September, 1.30pm to 3.30pm, a course on Industrial Archaeology (tutor, David Wilmot).

Information received from Derbyshire Victoria County History Trust – Two separate courses, each of ten illustrated lectures by Philip Riden, at Chesterfield Library. On Tuesday evenings, from 24 September, 7-9pm, “Rethinking Chesterfield’s History”, and on Wednesday afternoons, from 25 September, 2-4pm, “Exploring Scarsdale’s History”. Cost of each course, £15 – enrol at first meeting.

Derbyshire VCH is also organising “**Scarsdale Local History Fair**”, to be held at Bolsover Library on Saturday 12th October, 10.30am to 1pm. NEDIAS has agreed to provide a stand, alongside displays by local authorities, the National Trust, English Heritage and a variety of other local societies. **And an appeal:** For use in a Power Point presentation to run automatically from a computer screen on our stand, Cliff Lea is seeking your help: he would like digital photos of local historic industrial sites such as Canon Mill, Pleasley, Markhams, the Chesterfield and Cromford Canals, mine sites, or other suitable shots, for use as illustrations in the show. Do you have some photos which you could e-mail to Cliff at c2clea@tiscali.co.uk ?

Field Study Group - Damstead Works, Dronfield

In Newsletter No. 6 we described the site which the Old Dronfield Society had excavated in the early 1990s. Following the introduction to the site in March this year, NEDIAS agreed to work with the Old Dronfield Society towards a more certain future for the remains of the industrial activities. Since then we have shown the site to NEDDC’s Conservation Officer and, upon his advice, have been in touch with the site’s owners, Derbyshire County Council, for permission to carry out a site survey. Paul Smith is leading the work, for both archaeological survey purposes and historical research.

Despite considerable work by ODS, a written overview by SYIHS, plus some measurements by the IA Section of DAS, there are still gaps in the knowledge. In particular, the engine foundation stones suggest a small rotary-drive beam engine was installed, with a vertical cylinder; perhaps a cast-iron beam and supporting frame. Beyond the known dates for activity on the site, the time of the engine’s installation has not been defined. We feel that, somewhere in an engine maker’s surviving records, there could well be some useful information. If only we knew where to look ...

There are other areas to explore to improve our knowledge of the life and times of Damstead Works and a lot more needs to be done if a successful case is to be made for conservation of the site. So, would anyone willing to help in this quest in any way please contact Paul Smith on 01246 237069 (email pesmith1000@hotmail.com).

Clay Cross

As one of the members of the Heritage & Tourism Group of the Regeneration Project, your Chairman took part in the compilation and production of a Heritage Trail for Clay Cross, launched as part of the Celebration Week at the beginning of July. The leaflet describing the trail is currently available at local tourist offices. The trail shows the great extent to which the settlement developed at the Clay Cross Company's instigation. Although much has gone, there is still substantial evidence of the Company's activities to be seen in the residential and commercial parts of the township.

As part of the Celebration Week, the NEDIAS Chairman organised a talk by Malcolm Bond on the Ashover Light Railway. Malcolm's talk, held in Clay Cross Social Centre, attracted an audience of 178 and raised £143 for the Friends of Clay Cross Hospital. The Friends have put the money towards a fibre-optic rug now installed at the hospital to help with the calming of agitated patients.

The event, described by the Regeneration Officer, Corinna Beatson, as "the best attended talk held during the Celebration Week" has prompted her to suggest "there may well be grounds for starting an historical trust or society in the area". Leaflets on the 2002/03 lecture programme of NEDIAS were made available so perhaps the very least we can expect is a growth in our membership from the area. Anyone interested in Corinna's idea of forming an historical society should contact her at 01246 860800 during office hours.

Lumsdale Visit, by *Patricia Pick*

After a day of heavy showers the evening of Monday 10th June turned into a lovely sunny evening for 10 members to enjoy a guided tour of Lumsdale. Our guide Martyn met us at Highfield School and for the next 2 hours enthralled us with the history of Lumsdale, which turned it from a quiet valley in the 1800s into a thriving industrial site.

Starting with the oldest mill, a bone mill dating from the 1600s continuing past the sight of 2 derelict ponds to look at the 3rd pond. The site is littered with the remains of sawmills, bleach works, paint mills, corn mills, large wheel pits where a waterwheel sat, French and English mill stones. Also stone tram tracks. Sadly now much of the area is overgrown with vegetation.

As a result of the heavy rain the waterfalls were in full flow (who needs foreign parts when we have this on our doorstep).

The walk down the valley finished with a look at the lower bleach works. As we climbed back up the hill Martyn pointed out Lumsdale House where Mrs Mills (yes, that **is** her name) who owned Lumsdale and gave it to the Arkwright Society, lived.

Hidden in the trees at the top is the chimney. A flue runs from the lower bleach works to the chimney.

At each point in the tour Martyn produced splendid photos taken around the turn of the 20th century to the 2nd World War. [The experience was so profound that some of the group had to be revived after the tour with a glass of beer in the nearby Duke of Wellington – Ed.]

Dronfield Visit

As guests of the Old Dronfield Society, some sixteen members took part in a walking tour of the industrialised Drone river valley in lower Dronfield on Monday 8th July. Guided by Ann Brown and Barbara Jones of the ODS, we looked at the Damstead Works site, heavily overgrown since the March reconnaissance, and with some signs of unofficial disturbance in the meantime. We learned of the short-lived impact of the Cammell works; being opened and closed in short order at the end of the 19th century with dire consequences for the local economy and the Local Board to deal with.

The Midland Railway's 1870s direct route to Sheffield, along the valley, was also a dominant feature but perhaps the most interesting aspect was the development of the turnpike road and its "infrastructure", ie the various hostelries once an essential feature of travel but now changed in purpose. As with Lumsdale, the ODS provided truly graphic illustrations of the changes over the decades by showing photographs dating as far back as the last years of the stage coach.

Pleasley Pit

Monday 7th August. Under yet another cloudless, summer sky, fourteen members were welcomed by Bob Metcalfe of the Friends of Pleasley pit for a tour of the two engine houses, the tub system at the top of the south shaft (capped) and, for the more curious, the underside of the winding wheels and underfloor pipework amongst the foundations of the buildings. Bob, who will be remembered for his lively talk to NEDIAS earlier in the year, was an enthusiastic guide and the two hours passed all too quickly.

The dedication of a small band of volunteers in restoring the Lilleshall/Markham engine, plus putting in hand work on the second (Markham) engine on such a long-term project is very commendable. Bob drew attention to the high quality of the work on the engines and their housings, thanks to the site's status as a Scheduled Ancient Monument; a good example of liaison between enthusiasts and the major funders.

Another visit was offered for next year to see the progress made, both inside by the Friends and outside in the shape of a two-million pound visitor centre on which work is about to start. The Friends provided tea and biscuits at the end of the tour, while one member made a short video of Bob beside the Markham engine [material for the Christmas "Do" perhaps? – Ed.]

Coalfields Regeneration Trust

Earlier this year NEDIAS took part in a survey organised by the Trust to identify sources of coalfields heritage remaining in this area. The completed report presented to the Heritage Lottery Fund, having been prepared on a national basis, suggests that if action is now to be taken to ensure that coalfields heritage is preserved, more funding is needed in the coalfields communities. We understand that the Heritage Lottery Fund has agreed to respond to the report within three months. A copy of the report has been received by NEDIAS and can be borrowed by anyone interested in learning more (contact the Editor). Alternatively, the full report and its associated detailed working report can be found on the CRT website (www.coalfields-regen.org.uk) from 1st September 2002.

And Finally ...

Please send items for inclusion in the November Newsletter (No.8) to the editor by 21st October. Text can be scanned, taken from disks, transferred from email or typed for you by the editor – we can't say fairer than that, can we?

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.

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