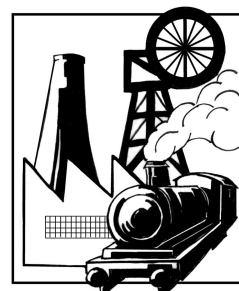


North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society

Newsletter No. 8 – November 2002



N.E.D.I.A.S

Editorial

From small beginnings, NEDIAS now has forty-four members (before counting joint members) and this growing base has enabled us to provide what we consider to be an appealing lecture programme as well as other events. Before complacency sets in, we now reach the point at which we ask you to renew your subscriptions for the coming year of 2003. We hope members consider NEDIAS is helping to develop a wider interest in the industrial archaeology and history of north east Derbyshire, and will continue to support our aims by subscribing for a further year's membership. A renewal form will be found in this mailing and our membership secretary looks forward to hearing from you!

Within this issue you will read about our first major attempt at what might be termed 'outreach' by NEDIAS in the shape of a display at the Scarsdale Local History Fair in Bolsover. It was also a valuable opportunity to make contact with people in other groups, a process aided by the confines of the location. Few people escaped without succumbing to the lures of a book or two.

The printed word is still important, despite the computer-age, and it would be good to see NEDIAS one day able to contribute to the local scene by publishing papers of more substance than space within this Newsletter allows. Budding writers of industrial history please take note.

In the meantime, we have received a review copy of *Aspects of Chesterfield*, edited by Geoff. Sadler, from Wharncliffe Books and our findings are within these pages. Suffice to say, it is a timely arrival for those wanting to avoid yet more socks or handkerchiefs in the next few weeks.

With seasonal greetings and best wishes for 2003,

David Wilmot

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**. The talks are free to NEDIAS members but visitors are asked for a donation of £1 for each meeting.

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. This presentation follows a recent and highly successful visit by NEDIAS members to the works of this fascinating company.

Christmas Gathering

Monday 16th December, from 7.30pm - Meet in the Portland Hotel, West Bars, for an informal chat over a glass (or so) of whatever you can afford. Gain improved domestic understanding by bringing your partner along to meet the group you mingle with on those other Monday nights! Take the opportunity to air your views in this informal, unhurried gathering.

No bow-ties, no Christmas turkey to digest, no Christmas pudding to cope with - come along as you are and have a good natter, about industrial archaeology or anything else for that matter.

Other Events of IA Interest

Archaeology Day - Saturday 18th January 2003, at the Pomegranate Theatre, Corporation Street, Chesterfield - 9.45am - 5.15pm, £8/£4, details from Chesterfield Museum.

WEA, Hurst House, Abercrombie Street, Chesterfield – Wednesday afternoons, commencing 8th January 2003, 1.30pm to 3.30pm, an ongoing course on Industrial Archaeology at which there are still a few places for newcomers (tutor, David Wilmot).

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What have we done since the last Newsletter?

The visit to **High Rake Mine**, Windmill, on the Tideswell side of Bradwell, took place on a September Saturday when the sun shone and John Barnatt was leading a team of archaeologists on site exploration and conservation. John gave a guided tour of the site, producing a picture from a time when the structures were above ground level and largely intact. It seems the venturers gave up after going some 700 feet down over ten years, through hard rock and without finding lead. The topside buildings were then left, finding later use as a source of stone for local house building, while the beam engine was moved on to Magpie Mine.

For the afternoon, we followed the trail of the beam engine to **Magpie Mine**, Sheldon. Peak District Mines Historical Society gave us a guided tour of the site, coinciding with a very heavy rain-shower but otherwise providing a good interpretation of the disparate remains covering a working life from the late 18th to the mid-20th centuries. We came away with an enhanced admiration for those who had worked at the mine, with uncertain monetary prospects, through its long and varied life and for those who had voluntarily devoted so much time to its conservation above ground. The exposed site, with tremendous views on a good day, must have called for a high degree of dedication from those looking for a living wage as well as from those working more recently as volunteers.

Cliff Lea set up and led the manning of the NEDIAS table at the Derbyshire VCH organised “**Scarsdale Local History Fair**”, held at Bolsover Library on Saturday 12th October. The fair was held in the intimate atmosphere of the library's upstairs room. Cliff's highly visual, and colourful, computerised display of industrial archaeological sites and items was in contrast to the more usual display boards, attracting much favourable comment as it rolled through the pre-set programme - the shape of things to come!

As well as bringing NEDIAS to the attention of the public at large, it was also a chance to meet members of the range of local history societies from this area. An unexpected side benefit was our learning of some industrial heritage items held in private collections.

Our **Lecture Programme** has been in full swing, and well attended despite some very wet evenings. The season started in September with a talk by Mervyn Allcock on the **Barrow Hill Engine Shed Society**, its recent work and the history of the site. As a locomotive depot, largely for traffic from Staveley Works, it may have lacked the glamour of the main line sheds, but has quickly emerged as a nationally recognised working railway museum. This is a truly remarkable achievement in railway preservation terms where progress is more usually measured in decades rather than years.

The October meeting heard Mary Smedley talk about the conservation of **Belper North Mill**, now often on the itinerary of overseas as well as local visitors. For November, we had the much awaited visit of Christine Richardson to talk about the **Chesterfield Canal**. Christine concentrated on the Shireoaks to east end of Norwood tunnel section, which includes Britain's first triple lock and is currently being restored for return of navigation. We will be taking up Christine's offer of a guided tour after the towpath's reopening next summer.

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Field Study Group - Damstead Works, Dronfield

We described the site in some detail in Newsletters No. 6 & 7. We have now obtained a licence from the owners of the site, Derbyshire County Council, to survey the site over the winter months. Autumn weather has brought the usual reduction in greenery so we can now see more of the site and Paul Smith is fairly champing at the bit to get a team together for the detailed survey work.

In addition to the archaeology, the search is on for more historical evidence of the occupancy and uses at the site. The dimensions of the beam engine, derived both from site measurements of foundations and an auction catalogue, have been estimated and enquiries are being made to see whether its maker can be identified. We have contacted the Newcomen Society in this respect and will be trying a number of other sources in the coming weeks. As always, will anyone able to help in this quest in any way please contact Paul Smith on 01246 237069 (email pesmith1000@hotmail.com).

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Derbyshire's Historic Role at the Dawn of the UK Oil Industry. by Cliff Lea

Introduction

The oil industry in Derbyshire has all but disappeared, but major events in our county at the very *birth* of the oil industry are of historical importance. This industry and oil itself play a

major part in the fabric of all our lives, as a source of energy and as a pawn in world politics, and it is with surprise to many that *the history of oil in Derbyshire is perhaps the most important part of the history of the whole UK oil industry.*

This article briefly summarises early discovery of oil in the county, the curiosity which led on to developing refined products, the sinking of the UK's first deep oil well and full scale subsequent production in Derbyshire. It describes the major local manufacturers of lubricants and emergence of a household name, and the vital refining which was carried out in Derbyshire during the second world war dedicated to keeping our aircraft flying, at a time when strategic oil supplies from overseas were in jeopardy.

Early Discovery

As in many areas of Britain, historical reports suggest that crude oil seeped from the ground at various sites around Derbyshire. The seepage was particularly reported in lead and coal mines but apart from early novelty value, appeared to have little use apart from waterproofing and preservative applications. As early as 1734, a lead worker at a mine near Eyam reported heavy bituminous oil deposit in the *interior* of a boulder which he cracked open, and this created great interest and experimentation in the locality.

Perhaps the greatest interest arose in 1847, when a Riddings ironmaster, James Oakes, uncovered a pool of black oil, a discovery which he exploited, and he went on to generate for a few years at least some 300 gallons per week. Oakes reported the finding to his relative Lord Playfair, who in turn suggested to a scientist friend in Scotland, James Young, that he should analyse and refine this interesting natural commodity.

And so the UK oil industry itself was born in Derbyshire, with early production, exploitation and laboratory investigation, a clear 10 years before the start of the US oil industry in Pennsylvania. Up until this point, energy was sourced from coal and wood, and lubricants came from vegetable and animal oils.

Young showed that distillation could separate the many parts of crude oil into its heavier and lighter fractions, and after laboratory test, he went on to develop refinery technology. His findings became a vital building block for the Scottish shale oil industry in the late 19th century, and for the US industry itself. The light fractions became a convenient fuel for the emerging internal combustion engine, but Young became particularly known for refining and separating out the heavy ends, a paraffin wax used for candles, which again in the late 19th century started to replace tallow wicks for domestic lighting. And leading to **“Paraffin”** Young's popular name tag. It was however Playfair who first presented details in a lecture at the Royal Institution in London, *a lecture given under illumination from “Paraffin” Young's candles.*

Drilling commences at Hardstoft.

During the early part of the 20th century, the British Government recognised the strategic position of oil as a source of energy, and recognised too the growing world domination of the

US oil industry. This strategic importance led the Government to commission surveys of likely parts of the country where oil reserves might be found in sufficient quantity for major exploitation. The surveys revealed that Derbyshire, and Hardstoft in particular, was geologically ideal as one of the sites for exploration by deep drilling. Spurred on at the end of the first world war, work commenced with the UK's first deep well at Hardstoft, on land owned by the Duke of Devonshire

Oil was struck at a depth of 3,070 feet in May 1919 – **the first successful deep oilwell in the UK**, an oilfield that carried on producing “Tibshelf Crude” until 1945. The well was capped in 1952, and that might seem to be the end of Derbyshire's momentous part in the history of the oil industry – except that part of the team involved in the capping and removal of equipment was reported to be a Belper company by the name of Dalton and Co, or Silkolene Lubricants as it was later known.

Dalton & Co had started as a veterinary supplier to the farming community in 1908, changing rapidly to mineral oils as the tractor took over from the horse. The company developed all types of lubricants, moving into the pharmaceutical area to become the only UK manufacturer of vaselines, and they continue production to this day in Staffordshire.

The Belper site of Silkolene rose to major and strategic significance during the second war, *when its site refined and recycled over 20 million gallons of lubricant for the nation's fighter and bomber aircraft*, a little known but vital activity during the war for the liberty of the nation. It was ironic that some 50 years later, Silkolene was acquired by a German multinational oil company.

Silkolene gained considerable expertise in advanced lubricant technology supplying to the aviation and aero engine industries, sharing this after the war in a 50/50 venture with an American company who later became one of the most successful worldwide players in petroleum additives, supplying directly to the major oil companies. Now known as Lubrizol, their European Research Centre employing hundreds of petroleum technologists, is still housed not 5 miles away from Belper at Hazelwood.

In the North of the county, another entrepreneur, Robert D. Nicol, recognised the importance of mineral oil in the early years of the 20th century, and R.D.Nicol & Co Ltd developed a range of automotive and industrial lubricants at Callywhite Lane, Dronfield, supplying metalworking fluids particularly for the steel industries of the Sheffield area. It is likely that they were an oil supplier to Ward's Damstead Works a few hundred yards away, a significant site currently under investigation by NEDIAS. Whilst R.D.Nicol & Co was later purchased by its Derbyshire competitor Silkolene, the site closing in the 1980's, it has left an interesting legacy and at least one famous name. One of Nicol's trade names from the early 1900's was a lubricant named “Kastrol” - spelled with a K – a name adopted under a different spelling by one of Nicol's previous associates Charles Wakefield, who also started an oil company at this time, which to this day remains a household name !

What Traces Remain?

So what footprints and remains can be seen in Derbyshire from this watershed in the history of the UK oil industry? At Callywhite Lane, Dronfield, some of Nicol's original buildings, laboratory and production units can still be seen, now used for different purpose, and at Belper, Silkolene's majestic Grade 2 listed stone office block and works is a landmark at the town centre roundabout, but sadly awaits re-development probably for a retail complex.

But the most interesting site is surely the area at Hardstoft which is now occupied by the Oilwells Nursery, and where the owners have developed an excellent display area open to visitors, and showing many of the surviving photographs and records of Britain's first deep oilwell and successful oil field. Tibshelf Crude is still said to ooze from the site.

References:

"Pioneers of British Industry – the men of faith who built our nation's wealth", F.George Kay, Rockcliffe Publishing, 1952

"The Recent Search for Oil in Great Britain", by H.P.W.Giffard, J. Inst. Mining Eng., Vol LXV, 1922/3, 221-250.

"The Oilwell and later developments at Hardstoft", by A. Ward, J. Inst. Pet. Tech., April 1928, No 68, Vol 14.

"The Story of Hardstoft Oilwell – Britain's first oilfield", J & R Peters and I. Brentnall, North Trent Publishing

"Oilwell Nursery", www.bolsover.gov.uk

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George Stephenson Returns to Scarsdale, by Cliff Lea

The raw Geordie character that was George Stephenson is set to return to the Chesterfield area, this time as an enduring statue or sculpture.

Redevelopments and construction of new buildings in the area are usually accompanied by decoration, art or sculpture under the "Percent for Art", where the developer is obliged to devote a proportion of costs to the artistic enhancement. Sounds a pretty good idea to me, we have too many drab buildings.

It was probably therefore highly appropriate that when the question of artwork for the new Chesterfield Station was under discussion, the Chesterfield Civic Society suggested that this could be an excellent vehicle for a local monument or statue to George Stephenson.

The project is now well advanced: a budget of £25,000 has been earmarked, with donation from the Civic Society itself.

So far, from a total of 30 possible sculptors, the names have been whittled down to 2: Stephen Hicklin and Graham Ibbeson.

Stephen Hicklin is a Suffolk and London based artist, well known for a number of bronzes, including the Marconi Memorial in Chelmsford. Graham Ibbeson has already completed a number of interesting statues, a characterful bronze totally catching the spirit of Eric Morecambe (actually unveiled by the Queen in his home town of Morecambe), the Miners' Memorial at Barnsley and a bronze called "The Scales of Justice" for the Law Courts in Durham. In fact, Chesterfield already has three of his works, two of which are in Walton. You can see details of the local "Percent for Art" successes – there are already over 40 art works in Chesterfield - in a leaflet available from Chesterfield Information Centre.

Both sculptors have to produce a small scale version for final selection at a meeting this November, and the final full scale version is due to be complete and in place before the end of 2003.

But will they get that raw Geordie character, the blunt approach, the ungainly workaholic? My money is on Graham Ibbeson winning the contract, and if you want to see whether he can catch the spirit, **just look at his "Eric Morecambe"** on the web site at www.axisartists.org.uk

And if you need to know more about that Geordie character himself, suggest you try the new book by Simon Garfield, "*The Last Journey of William Huskisson*", which recounts the world's first death on a steam railway.

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Book Review

Aspects of Chesterfield, edited by Geoffrey Sadler, 12 contributors, illustrated paperback, 176 pages, published by Wharncliffe Books, Barnsley 2002 (ISBN: 1-903425-25-5), Priced at £9.99. From its cover reproduction painting of Chesterfield and canal to its final profile of each contributor, *Aspects of Chesterfield* provides a lively glimpse of the town's more recent history. Written by an impressive array of local historians, it offers a series of papers on Chesterfield, its industries, commerce and social activities. The *Aspects* formula counters the trend of pictorial books in which the reader pieces together the underlying historiography caption by caption. Here, each contributor has the chance to develop the plot, with photographs, maps and drawings in a supporting role.

Geoff. Sadler's item on the Sheffield Road's Rendezvous Dance Hall will doubtless bring back memories for some. So perhaps will John Lilley's account and photographs of 1930s organised swimming at Inkerman Pool. Created in an area of colliery and pot-bank dereliction, the pool is a stunning contrast with today's expectations. For industrial historians, Trevor Nurse gives a masterful account of the Dixon family and Whittington Glasshouse, enhanced by his own excellent drawings where photographic evidence now eludes us.

The history of the Markham Company and several of its varied products is laid out by Peter Hawkins; a timely item in view of the present redevelopment of the site for housing. A shame that, probably from constraints on space, there is no mention of the preserved Markham winding

machinery at Pleasley Pit. There are also some cliff-hangers; in *Spital Through the Ages*, Sonia Preece extols the virtues of parachute silk for dress-making during WWII, but leaves the outcome of the December 1941 sighting of parachutes over Bolsover untold. Perhaps we can have a sequel; also to include the impact on Spital of the 1890s LD&EC Railway?

The Borough boundary is not sacrosanct. The enigmatically titled *I Remember Arkwright* by Charles Dickens being a case in point. Followers of industrial matters will forgive the word-play after reading Charles' account of colliery working. David Edwards also contributes from outside, with *Victorian Wingerworth - a 'Close' Parish?* As one would expect, David's paper includes very useful information on the economic activity associated with the area. Hopefully there will be second volume soon, to expand his theme and those of the other contributors.

If there has to be a criticism of this book, it should be the quality of reproduction of some photographs. A few of the more recent photographs are rather grey and insipid - glass plate negatives scoring over modern colour print film? Even so, this book is highly appealing and should enjoy a wide readership. It should be a 'must' for all serious industrial historians of north-east Derbyshire.

DRHW

And Finally ...

Please send items for inclusion in the February 2003 Newsletter (No.9) to the editor by 21st January. Text can be scanned, taken from disks, transferred from email or typed for you by the editor – all you need to do is write a few lines of text - try it, and ENJOY!!

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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