North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society



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Avenue Coking Plant



arly industrial development in this area of Derbyshire started before 1600, when limestone quarries were established at Stone Edge and Bole Hill. Iron smelting then began at Smithy Pond and subsequently at Nethermoor and Furnace Hill. At nearby Woodthorpe between c.1788 to 1825, shallow iron ore deposits were discovered, and bell pits were developed. A short plateway gangroad transported the ore from Woodthorpe to a furnace at Wingerworth. A lead mine was also established next to the Derby Road in the 1800s. The collective name for the district known as Avenue" took its title from a tree-lined public footpath of the same name, which once crossed the site. Previously, there had been a stately home here named Wingerworth Hall, built in 1724 and belonging to Sir Windsor Hunloke. Eventually, the Hall fell into disuse and was demolished in 1927, which allowed further development of the surrounding land.

Over on the east side of the Midland Main Line (the "Up" side or London direction in railway terms) several collieries were also developed. These were Lings (opened in 1788), then Williamthorpe (1854), Alma (1855), Grassmore (1861) and Holmewood, also known as Hardwick (1874). Just south of Hasland, a double track skew bridge crossed over the Midland main line, and this allowed coal traffic from these collieries to reach lucrative coal market in London.

Avenue colliery itself opened in 1868 and by 1900, production was from eleven shafts. But by 1938, Avenue colliery was becoming worked out and some of the land reverted to farmland. Mainly due to underground flooding problems, the colliery became disused in 1950. The Avenue Coking (or Carbonisation) plant that followed was developed on the same site in anticipation of the "Clean Air

RIGHT: The Avenue coking plant, Wingerworth, in 1982. The factory closed 10 years later. Photograph: Alan Murray-Rust/geograph.co.uk, cropped image





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Act" of 1956, which would create a national demand for domestic open-hearth fires and hot water boilers using smokeless and odourless fuel. This process consisted of baking coking coal in batteries of huge ovens for up to 17 hours, to produce pure carbon in the form of coke and it took 15 tons of coal to produce 11 tons of coke. When operating at full capacity, the Plant typically processed more than 2,000 tons of coke daily. which was marketed under the trade name of "Sunbrite". Construction of the new coking plant had commenced in 1952 and eventually covered 242 acres on the west side of the British Railways Midland Main Line, between Chesterfield and Clay Cross. In the days of railway semaphore signalling, three mechanical signal boxes were required to control all the diverse train movements, which gives an indication of the traffic intensity. The by-products of the coking process included coal gas, sulphuric acid, ammonium sulphate, benzol and coal tar. The plant was self-sufficient in producing its own electricity supplies and any surplus was diverted to the national grid. Towns gas was also produced for industrial and domestic supplies serving the district of Chesterfield. In its 40 years of existence, the Avenue plant became the largest coking plant of its type in Europe. It produced a total of 18 million tons of smokeless coal and at its peak, 800 staff were employed on site.

Witnessing a coke oven being discharged was not unlike seeing the red-hot lava flowing from an erupting volcano, including the flying embers, intense heat, billowing smoke and the sulphurous fumes. Once the baking process had been completed, the coke was ejected sideways by hydraulic rams out of the ovens, to be tipped out via. a sloping concrete apron. Directly alongside, was an adjoining rail siding exclusively used by bogie rail hopper wagons called quenching cars. These were positioned in readiness alongside the ovens and when filled, were shunted away by a locomotive when the process was completed. Then, the cars were immediately hauled to a water spraying plant, to extinguish the embers and this final process created huge clouds of steam. This vision of searing heat, smoke and steam is now consigned forever to the history of industrial Britain.

The plant relied on its extensive self-contained railway system and a numerous fleet of shunting locomotives. The earliest two shunting locomotives in use at the new coking plant came second-hand by transfer from the nearby Holmewood Colliery, both arriving early in 1955. These were steam engines, the first being a Peckett 0-6-0ST named Hardwick No.3 (works number 940 of 1902) and a Hunslet 0-4-0ST which was works number 3529 of 1923. In a previous life, it had been built for the brewers Ind Coope and had worked on their private railway at Burton on Trent. All subsequent locos at Avenue were diesel powered and the first to arrive in 1955 were a batch of five new build 204hp 0-6-0 diesel mechanical locomotives, supplied by the Hunslet Engine Company of Leeds. These carried the Hunslet works numbers 4511/2/4974/4514/5, in order. The design was essentially the industrialised version of the same type that Hunslet had also supplied to

British Railways, which became the class 05 shunters. Each of these locos were named and numbered sequentially as "Avenue 1" onwards, with brass nameplates being carried. In 1970, the original Avenue 4 and 5 were scrapped and replaced by two Hudswell Clarke 0-4-0 diesel mechanical locos of 255hp (works numbers 1388 and 1345 respectively), which inherited the names from their predecessors. Two further arrivals occurred in 1978, which had been transferred from Glasshoughton coking plant in West Yorkshire. These locos were built by Thomas Hill of Rotherham and were 210hp four-wheeled "Vanguard" diesels with hydraulic drive, numbered 199v of 1968 and 219v of 1970, becoming Avenue 6 and 7.



Avenue Sidings - LMR Type 15 design signal box on the Midland Mainline at Chesterfield (1968). Behind can be seen the long-closed Avenue Coking plant. Simon Barnes

Similarly, Hunslet 0-6-0 diesel hydraulic loco 6973 came from the Nantgarw coking plant, near Cardiff and by coincidence it was already number 7 by its previous owners, so it took the place of the then withdrawn Thomas Hill-built locomotive named Avenue 7.



Courtesy of North Wingfield Local History Group.

The coke oven operations at Avenue required their own dedicated pair of specialised locomotives and these were supplied as new by Greenwood and Batley of Leeds in 1955, being works numbers 2508/9. The lowly status of these locos meant that they were not named in the "Avenue" series. The locomotive fleet was gradually depleted from 1982, starting with the original Hunslet 0-6-0DM locos, the last of which were scrapped in 1985. The remaining two Hudswell Clarke locos Avenue 4 (now renamed as "Claire") and Avenue 5 (now "Grace") were sold off concurrently with the coking plant closure in 1992. Both of these locomotives now survive in preservation at the Cambrian Railway and Peak Rail respectively. The two Thomas Hill Vanguard locos were withdrawn and 199v was initially preserved, but later scrapped in 2004. Works

number 219v was scrapped on site in 1994. The Hunslet 0-6-0DH number 6973 was later sold off, but still exists in preservation and is now based at the former Ministry of Defence railway at Long Marston. In the final days at Avenue, only the two coke oven locos remained on the site, and they were the last to go with the curtailing of production, but happily they are both now preserved on the Tanfield Railway.

In the final years, with the closure of many local collieries, the Avenue plant was forced to import coking coal from Germany and Poland via. Hull docks, for onward delivery by rail. The falling demand for domestic coke and the advent of abundant North Sea oil caused the plant to finally close in 1992, after 36 years of production with the loss of 500 jobs. In 1999, the East Midlands Development Agency purchased the site from the British Coal Board. Subsequently, clearance of the derelict structures on the site commenced in earnest. This included the demolition of the two iconic brick chimneys, each 250 feet (77 metres) tall, together with all the various buildings and associated plant, which in total took four years to complete. In parallel, the cleaning up all the areas of heavy ground contamination, which took almost 20 years, at a total cost of £172.3 million. The whole process was said to be one of the most complex and ambitious reclamation work

was completed by 2013. Eventually, it is intended that approximately 1,000 new homes will be built in the area, together with 12 acres (4.9 hectares) of land for business use. This will be followed by landscaping and the planting of 7,000 trees. The Derbyshire Wildlife Trust are now managing the nature reserve and the public open spaces are looked after by the Land Restoration Trust. There are now future plans for building a primary school and recreation facilities on the site. In addition, the development of wetland reed beds for wildlife habitats, a fishing pond and sports pitches are currently in progress. It is anticipated that all these works will be completed by 2033. It is also hoped that the industrial heritage of the site can be acknowledged with a suitable information board.



Previously The Avenue coking works, this site has been restored to provide space for both wildlife and people. The waterways and grasslands are home to kingfishers, small mammals and grass snakes, whilst the big open skies give views of kestrels and skylarks. The large multi-user paths and easy access make this a great place for a family day out with the crooked spire and Chesterfield skyline as a backdrop.

Dates for your diary

NEDIAS Lecture Programme



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 11 September 2023	"The historic CEGB coal fired power stations on the River Trent" by Ian Mitchell
Monday 9 October 2023	"Riddings oil refinery, Derbyshire, 1848. 175 years ago this year - Britain's and the world's first" by Cliff Lea
Monday 13 November 2023	"The Iron Industry in the Rother Valley in the Canal Age, 1780- 1840" by Philip Riden
Monday 11 December 2023	CHRISTMAS Meeting

NEDIAS Outside Visits

Saturday 10 June 2023	Alport: After our great lead mining visit to Winster of last year, Tony Wood will be guiding us on an amble around the lead mining remains of that beautiful Peak District village of Alport at the confluence of the Rivers Bradford and Lathkill. Names to Brian Dick, ☎ 01246 205720 or briandick34@hotmail.com	
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The Rosedale Ironstone Mines and Railway

Cliff Lea

was recently exploring up on the North Yorkshire Moors around the Rosedale area of the Cleveland Hills near Pickering, hunting out the last remaining signs of the incredibly extensive ironstone mining of the mid-1800s.

One seam of the ore was said to contain no less than 67% pure iron, and one of the seams was up to 70ft thick. More typically over the area 45-50% iron purity was usual. It's no wonder that some 20 miles of standard gauge rail track with inclines was constructed to carry the ore from this remote spot to the iron smelters at Teesside and the North East. It's estimated the railway carried up to 500,000 tonnes per year in the boom years, and over 11 million tonnes ore over its lifetime. By the 1880s, **it's calculated that one-third of the pig iron produced in Britain** was sourced from these ores on the Cleveland Hills.

And the boom years? It's known that mining there probably started from outcrops of the ore in the early ironage, and continued with medieval bloomeries discovered over the years. The large scale operations in the Rosedale area started in 1850 with discovery of unusually thick seams. The 548 folk living already in Rosedale Abbey by 1851 swelled to almost 3,000 as the Yorkshire Klondike began.



So what did I see? I climbed up out onto the moors on a cold, wet and foggy day from the village of Rosedale Abbey, along the aptly named Chimney Bank. The Bank so called both because of its steepness, and the 100ft chimney of the Bank Top engine house which powered the Ingleby Incline of 4,300 ft length right up to Bank Top, 1,400ft up on the moors.. The chimney – no longer there - must have been an incredible feature on that bleak landscape until demolished in 1972.

All that remains are signs of the footings of the engine house, a few cottages still inhabited and the rail tracks

(minus rails) in some areas can still just be made out. The line of the incline is very visible, but perhaps the most impressive sight is the bank of absolutely massive calcining kilns for the ironstone.

To reduce the weight of ore to be carried, these massive coal-fired calcining kilns were brick built in 1856, taking eighteen months to construct. They were to reduce the Iron Carbonate to mixed Iron Oxides, making the ore so much lighter to transport.

I can just imagine those bleak decades of the operation, the many workers toiling up out onto the moors in all weather, the vast tonnages of coal needed carrying one way, and millions of tons of ores the other. There were many accidents and some winters it was quite impossible to work – the local press reported many fatal incidents, the mining accidents, the runaways on the Ingleby Incline. And to animals too – one report in the York Herald of 5 December 1868:

"On Wednesday night a driver was fetching a set of loaded wagons out of the Rosedale east mines on to the top of the new calcine kilns when, neglect of having a spring catch on, he was unable to get the horse unyoked from the wagons. The consequence was that the horse was dragged into the kiln which was full of burning ironstone, and the horse was burned to death."

NORMANTON – Nottinghamshire

Terry Wilshin

I came across this in a book giving a bit of history about every village in Newark and Sherwood DC. I'm sure that you know most of it – but a bit of a connection.

"The hamlet of Normanton, just outside Southwell, was once a separate parish with its own church. In 1840 the Hall became the retirement home of John Barrow (1790-1871), a wealthy merchant from a Southwell family who had lived in Bilboa while trading with Portugal, Spain and China. His other house was Ringwood Hall at Staveley. George Barrow, also from this Southwell family, developed the Staveley Iron and Coal Company and left his huge fortune to John's son, John James Barrow (1829-1903). Barrow Hill near Chesterfield is named after the family. Normanton was bought off his father's trustees in the late 1880s by John James Barrow, who wanted it for his son, Major Leonard Barrow. An active businessman, John James was also Chairman of the financially disastrous Amsterdam Waterworks Company and another doubtful speculation, the Manchester & Milford Railway (which got nowhere near either place). His second marriage, in 1867, at the age of thirty-eight was to Dorothea Deans, who at eighteen was not much older than his children – this caused some friction.

Another one of this family, John Burton Barrow lived at Thurgarton Priory. If we go back a generation, Richard Barrow was Vicar-Choral at Southwell for more than sixty years, while his brother, William, was Vicar General and then Archdeacon of Nottingham. Normanton Hall was also a school for the deaf and the home of the managing Director of Player's Cigarettes, William Milligan."

Places of Interest

Richard Varley

Cliff recently received this email from Richard:

I think you asked in one of your emails for members to let you know about any interesting places they had visited.

I have recently visited the Statfold Barn Railway between Measham in Leicestershire and Tamworth in Staffordshire. They have many narrow gauge steam (and diesel) locomotives in full running order and complete with period rolling stock.

They have preserved standard gauge, two-foot gauge and two-foot-sixinch gauge, the latter two having about a mile run of track complete with a return loop.

They also have a double-deck open top tram operating parallel to the main rail track.



In the museum they have a roundhouse turntable and a great selection of locomotives on display, many of which haul trains on their Steam Spectacular day. On this day they claim to operate more engines than anywhere else in Britain and I can well believe it. This year it was quite busy and their catering facilities were certainly very busy.

I think the easiest way to get there from Chesterfield is via M1 & M42 to Junction 11, then take the B5493 south west for 4.8 miles through No-Man's Heath. Statfold Barn Railway is on the left with the entrance marked by signs and a large red Cadbury tank engine.



It's best to check their website <u>https://www.statfold.com</u> for information on opening times, prices and events. Please note they are NOT open every day.

In a somewhat opposite direction Bolton Steam Museum <u>https://www.nmes.org</u> has the largest collection of working mill engines in Europe and is well-worth a visit on one of their steaming days (next is Sunday and Monday 28 - 29 May – 10:00am – 4:00pm. All the engines will be in steam). Entrance and car parking are free but they are grateful for a donation towards the cost of raising steam.



Other dates for 2023 are: Sunday & Monday 27 - 28 August; Saturday & Sunday 28 - 29 Oct and Thursday & Friday 28 - 29 Dec – 10:00am – 4:00pm.

The engines can also be viewed (static) on Wednesdays and Sundays (10am - 3pm) when some of the engines can be operated on electric drive.

Please see their 2023 leaflet at <u>https://www.nmes.org/</u> nmes2023.pdf

Members' thoughts on arranging visits to these **Places of Interest** would be appreciated.

Stephenson Snippets The 'need for speed' – or 'let the train take the strain'

Rev. Chris Jackson

Rev. Chris Jackson was the Rector of Holy Trinity and Christ Church, Chesterfield from 2001 to 2010 and regularly contributed 'Stephenson Snippets' to In Touch, the Parish Magazine. This article was previously published in that magazine in **July 2008** and is reproduced with permission.

Just recently Network Rail announced that it was looking at the feasibility of building five new high–speed main routes out of London. I thought, of course, of the Stephensons and their contribution to the creation of the country's rail network. Robert was heavily involved in the construction of the London to Birmingham line. Here's a quote from Victoria Haworth's '*The Making of a Prodigy*':

1834 - Robert Stephenson almost lived on the line. The scale of the 111 mile long railway from London to Birmingham was unprecedented. Due to the accuracy of his designs, and attention to detail, his ability to organise and choose capable subordinates, he gains their respect and can delegate mundane day - to - day activities. The works were completed on time at a cost of £5,500,000.'

There is a fascinating story which unfolds as the years pass of how the huge expansion of the railways connected with wild financial speculation. It was a kind of railway mania. The railways were built not just because of engineering skill of which the Stephensons and Brunel are the main examples but because people wanted to make money and this was the place to invest. There were crooks and George Hudson is amongst the foremost of these. He was well known to GS and RS and perhaps merits a 'Snippet' of his own. Adrian Jarvis summarises in his Shire book on GS:

'While the detail of Hudson's method is complicated, the principle is simple. He bought an incomplete or unsuccessful railway which was paying little or nothing in dividends and identified a simple fictitious reason for its failure, such as the need for a connection with another particular line, and went to Parliament to get loan sanction to build the said connection. He then spent much of that (borrowed) money on paying inflated dividends to the original shareholders, so causing the shares in that company to rise considerably'....and so on.

People made and lost money in considerable amounts. Jarvis describes him as one of the 'greatest white-collar criminals of the century' and says how GS was actually taken in by him.

Anyway, though some lines did not work others did and the rail network expanded.

Unlikely that there will be a 'Mania' for railway building now but it looks promising that railways have a hugely greater part to play in the transport needs of the future.

They are vastly 'greener' than road. Though billions may be needed for investment if Britain is to meet the target of reducing carbon emissions by 60% by 2050 these may be sums worth finding. I was struck by the comment the other day that one day Bangladesh may not exist. Rising sea levels will mean the land will be swallowed up, engulfed by the ocean and melting ice–caps. Yet there is a problem with high–speed trains. Very high speed rail is actually not good for carbon emission. If you increase speed from 200 kilometres per hour – 125 miles – the current maximum speed of trains – to 350 kph there is a 90% increase in energy consumption. There's an interesting parallel with road travel. How often do we see cars going hugely quickly on our roads. I was overtaken the other day on a motorway by several cars which in almost the blink of an eye were out of sight and they must have been doing 100+mph as I was (of course!) at 70mph. Is it pious to say it's a Christian duty to keep to within the speed limit? I actually think it is a Christian duty to do just that! Think of the fuel burnt up more quickly by speeding too much. Has anyone computed how much fuel could be saved nationally if everyone drove at 56 mph on motorways? There's a thought! Could it come to that being law if oil continues to be hugely expensive or impossible to get?

Numbers seem to show railways are becoming more popular. Just before the First World War 23,000 miles of track connected all parts of the country. In the 60s one billion rail journeys were made annually. Then comes Dr Beeching. I actually remember hearing the engine whistles at Brecon, South Wales, as the last train pulled into the station there before the line was discontinued.

The lowest point was reached in 1983 when 630 million journeys were made. Last year there were 1.2 billion journeys, the highest number since 1946 when the railway network was twice as big.

Lower the prices of course – that's what should happen. Yet, booking in advance, travelling by rail can be good value. As I write this I am due to go to Salisbury and back by rail and it has cost me £48.90 for a day return. (The Senior Rail Card does bring it down!). I reckon that's pretty good, and it gives me eight hours reading and relaxing time on board. Lovely views of the Severn to enjoy! GS and RS would be pleased at all this and at the prospects of developing the national rail network which was so dear to their hearts.

Here are some illustrations of the work of RS on that first line up north out of London.



Dene Quarry Walk

Jamie Mather

On Saturday 29 April 2023 NEDIAS members and friends enjoyed a walk through Cromford village and around the huge Dene Quarry, which has been producing limestone products since the 1940s. We returned through Slinter Wood, with plenty of reminders of lead extraction and water power from earlier industrial times. Special thanks to Jill and Mike, our friendly and knowledgeable guides.

All Photographs © Jamie Mather



LEFT: Looking at some of the architectural history in Cromford Market Place, near the start of the walk RIGHT: Tarmac Dene Quarry information board, a little out of date now



LEFT: At the vehicle entrance to Dene Quarry before climbing to follow the footpath around the quarry rim RIGHT: General view of Dene Quarry as we followed the footpath round



LEFT: Descending into Slinter Wood, through a former lead mining area RIGHT: Slinter Mill. Built around 1800 for the lead industry, later a bobbin mill and then a sawmill. Now a private house

IA News and Notes

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE DAY – EMIAC 99

This year Derbyshire Archaeological Society are reviving the East Midlands Industrial Archaeology Conference which has been in limbo for the last few years due to Covid.

It will be held at Sudbury Gasworks in Derbyshire on Saturday 17 June 2023.

The Old Gasworks, in the Derbyshire village of Sudbury, opened in 1875 and was designed by George Devey, a noted architect of the time. Gas was produced from coal and piped to provide lighting for Sudbury Hall and houses in the village. The gasholder was dismantled in the 1930s and the building stood empty and deteriorated for many years.

With grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other sources, the original retort house has now been restored, and a new circular meeting room constructed on the footprint of the former gasholder.

This Heritage Day is one of the first chances to see the gasworks in its new guise, learn about the development of artificial lighting and its use on country house estates, and the extensive improvements made to Sudbury Hall and the village in the 19th Century.

Full details can be accessed at https://www.derbyshireas.org.uk/emiac/

Wingfield Station -DHBT 'Hard Hat Tours' - 2nd & 7th June 2023

This summer DHBT are offering special 'behind the scenes' hard hat tours of Wingfield Station. Ackroyd Construction will take you on a 45 minute 'hard hat tour' of the site, showing you what they have been working on since February this year - and talking about what is planned before the works complete in a few months.

Spaces are very limited due to the nature of the site - we can only accommodate 10 people in each group. There will be tours at 11am and 12:45pm on both the 2nd and 7th June - full details and free booking (which is essential) here:

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/wingfield-station-hard-hat-tour-for-friends-of-dhbtwingfield-station-tickets-615986210337

If you can't make either date, or if the tours have sold out, please add yourself to the waiting list or contact Lucy directly $\leq lucy@derbyshirehistoricbuildingstrust.org.uk>;$ we will do our best to run a further tour if there is demand.

We've been busy planning our launch programme for later on this year. We're still seeking more volunteers who would be willing to help us with various activities and events during September and October - if you think you could spare some time read more about it here - and please do get in touch:

https://www.derbyshirehistoricbuildingstrust.org.uk/post/seeking-new-volunteers-to-support-our-wingfieldstation-launch-events-this-autumn

Funding success for Cromford Mills

The Arkwright Society has been awarded a grant of almost £0.25m by the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the next phase of its regeneration at Cromford Mills in Derbyshire. This will support visitor engagement activities at Cromford Mills and aid education at this internationally-important textile site. The next phase of regeneration at Cromford Mills will focus on the repair and repurposing of the remaining buildings on the site, in particular the iconic 'First Mill' built by Sir Richard Arkwright in 1771. With £20,000 match funding from the Duke of Devonshire Charitable Trust, a refreshed masterplan will be commissioned for the continuing regeneration of the Mills and a business plan for their future use. This includes installation of a turbine powered water wheel in one of the historic wheel pits at Cromford Mills this spring.

https://www.cromfordmills.org.uk/249599-funding-for-cromford-mills/

The Sad Story of Hermitage Mill, Mansfield

All too frequently textile mills are lost to fires. The textile mills of northern England often get the most attention but it should not be forgotten that the East Midlands had a noteworthy textile industry. This is the story of one of them.

In 2021, a planning application was submitted to convert Hermitage Mill, listed Grade II, to a 70 bed nursing home, with the erection of 31 private homes within the site's curtilage. The mill was in poor condition, but it was still a valuable reminder of the town's historic textile industry, and was noted in Pevsner's Nottinghamshire (2020 edition). Some original features were to be retained including cast iron columns, the main staircase and access to the former wheel pit. AIA supported the application.



Hermitage Mill, Mansfield, prior to its destruction by fire in 2022 (picture © Nottingham Post)

Cliff Lea

There were a number of revisions with the application being finally approved in May 2022, despite a fire 28 March 2022, the result of arson, which effectively destroyed the mill. The approval was on the grounds the mill would be rebuilt. Then in March 2023 there was a request to de-list the mill. Sadly there are no grounds to refuse such a request given the minimal amount that remains. It is yet another case of our industrial history being eroded.

Chairman's Chat

As I sit here with sunshine blazing, yet still quite early in the year, thoughts turn to some of the wonderful NEDIAS visits we have made over the years, most with brilliant and so enthusiastic guides. To Wortley Top Forge I think twice, last year with Tony Wood in the lead mining sights around Winster, and also last year to see the progress with restoration at Wingfield Station. If you missed that you can book again, see page 10. To great museums at Kelham Island, the Portland Works, Sheffield Assay Office, Rolls-Royce museum, railway roundhouses in both Barrow Hill and Derby, and railway workshops on the North York Moors line as well as at Wirksworth. You may remember wonderful explorations at quarrying sites, copper mines, lead mines, textile mills and museums.

So where to go to next, I know what I enjoy, but what do you enjoy. You must let me know what you think we should organise. This year we have just had a great guided tour at Dene and Slinter quarries near Wirksworth/Cromford, and we have two other dates already now fixed. The first is to visit that lovely Peak District village of Alport, see Visits on page 4, led by the very enthusiastic Tony Wood. And also a guided walk around Belper in September to see some of the important Strutt buildings, the early workers housing at Long Row, and the River Gardens - possibly for lunch in the garden cafe there by the water? Please get your names on the visit lists at the meeting.



On Saturday 13 February a group from NEDIAS were taken "behind the scenes" to see some of the archived collection at Chesterfield Museum. We were led by Maria Barnes, Collections Manager and after a short presentation we were able to browse amongst the stacks and shelves to see the really fascinating collection.

Where would you like to go next, and should it be a river or canal cruise, or a rail trip? Please also let me know what day of the week is best for you on these outings.

In the meantime we have our latest talk at St Thomas' coming up on MONDAY 8th, probably a very popular one on the subject of those great narrow gauge railways of Wales.

See you on Monday.





Very ably led by Martyn Taylor-Cockayne, NEDIAS had a splendid visit on a sunny Saturday in October 2016 to see the remains of Codnor Castle. The NEDIAS group with slag blocks of Portland Tramway in the background.

And finally . It's Seldom Seen

Cliff Lea

ave you been to see it? I certainly found it difficult initially to locate since it's hidden at the bottom of a slope surrounded by towering trees.

But actually when you know it's there, Seldom Seen Engine House is pretty convenient, it's nestling in a hollow in Frith Wood in the Moss Valley and only just a mile or so north of Eckington. Dating from between 1855 and 1875, this Scheduled Ancient Monument is an unusually large and rare form of engine house. It's the last remaining building from the Plumley Colliery which closed before WW1.

The monument includes the ruined buildings, earthworks and



buried remains of Plumley Colliery, including the engine house, fan house, coke ovens and conical tips. Its remains provide evidence for the layout and operation of a late 19th century coal mine. The EH listing describes the site:

"The Seldom Seen engine house, in the northern part of the site, stands to a height of 12m-15m. It is built on rising ground, overlooking the small valley of the Moss Brook to the north. The brick-built engine house is unusually large, with walls pierced by round arched and square openings. Some roof and floor timbers survive and timbers, one moulded and one bearing a pulley, protrude from the south wall. Within, thick bearing walls for an indoor beam engine survive. The engine is thought to have been used for both winding and pumping in the shaft, and its boiler was located in a brick chamber built against the west wall of the engine house, the ruined walls of which survive. To the east of the engine house are a number of earthworks believed to represent coke ovens, which will contribute towards understanding the layout of the site. Immediately north of the engine house is a range of spoil heaps, at least two of which are characteristically conical in form. A brick-built adit or mine entrance, partially visible beneath later deposits, is cut into the slope, south of the engine house where the land rises. West of this are the ruined remains of a Guibal fan house with parts of the stone-built opening for the steam-powered fan still visible. Guibal fans were commonly used in the later 19th century to ventilate coal mines. South of the fan house and adit, at the top of the slope, a broad footpath follows the east-west line of a former railway which served the colliery, and remains of the railway are expected to survive beneath it. To the south of the path, further earthworks and ruins remain visible in woodland including the remains of a second engine house with intact engine bed, large well-preserved earthworks representing reservoirs shown on the O S map of 1897 and also the remains of several shafts, some large and collapsed."

Quite a pleasant walk - park in Eckington near Eckington School and walk across the fields to Frith Wood and start hunting. And why is it called Seldom Seen? Well, two reasons are toted around. The obvious one is that is tucked away out of sight. The second rather implausible reason is that it's haunted by a ghost which is seldom seen!

Contributions, no matter how short (maybe about a visit you have made), and preferably by email to editor@nedias.co.uk, for inclusion in future editions of this newsletter are most welcome.

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