North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society

NEDIAS Newsletter No. 98 – May 2025

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200th Anniversary of Region's Iconic Role in Railway History Set for Grand Celebration

Chesterfield's pivotal role in birth of the world's railway system is set to be commemorated thanks to a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Holy Trinity Church, the final resting place of George Stephenson, has been awarded £240,600 to launch the project that will honour the legacy of the 'Father of Railways' and explore the lasting impact of railway engineering in Chesterfield.

The project comes at a time of renewed interest in railway history, with 2025 marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of the modern railway.

On 27 September 1825, George Stephenson's steam-powered Locomotion No. 1 travelled 26 miles between Shildon, Darlington, and Stockton, carrying hundreds of passengers to great fanfare.

It set in motion a train of events that changed the world forever. Holy Trinity, which is situated on Newbold Road, has long been a site of interest for railway enthusiasts and local schools, but this initiative will significantly expand its role as a visitor destination and educational hub.

With additional funding support from EMR (£5,000), Cross Country Rail (£5,000), Raymond Ross Fund (£25,000) Grayson's Solicitors (£1,000) and Holy Trinity Church itself (£16,000), the project will enhance visitor facilities, create new interpretation materials, and develop engaging activities for schools, families, and the wider community.

The initiative will explore not only Stephenson's life and engineering achievements but also the wider industrial history of Chesterfield. It will shed light on the Victorian-era expansion of the town, the development of the Clay Cross Company, and the town's role in railway and coal mining history. The project will also commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Miners' Strike, reflecting on the changes in industry that shaped the region.

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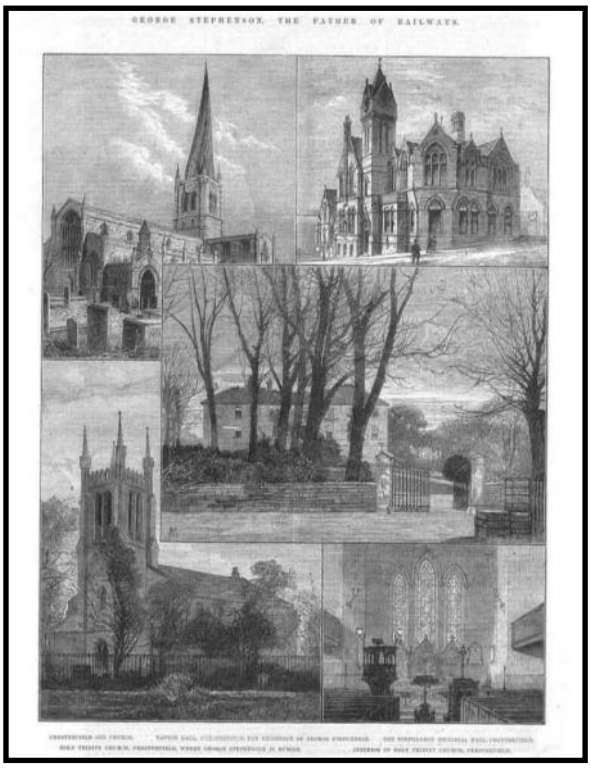
https://www.facebook.com/nediaschesterfield/?fref=ts

Plans include:

- The transformation of Holy Trinity's community rooms into a dedicated visitor facility.
- The creation of new interpretation materials highlighting Stephenson's influence on Chesterfield and railway engineering.
- A series of public events and celebrations marking the railway's 200th anniversary.
- Educational and engagement activities for schools and visitors, connecting communities with their industrial heritage.
- Volunteer and learning opportunities to equip people with heritage and research skills.
- A focus on sustainable transport and the future of railway engineering, ensuring the project connects the past with the present and future.



Reverend Jilly Hancock of Holy Trinity Church said:

"We are delighted to have received this generous support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players and our funding partners, we can now ensure that George Stephenson's story and Chesterfield's rich railway heritage are celebrated and shared with future generations."

Dates for your diary

NEDIAS Lecture Programme

Meetings 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 12 May 2025 **7:30pm** **David Wilmot Memorial Lecture**	**Robert Mee:** "Bradshaw's Guide, and an early rail tour" - You probably all know about Bradshaw's from Michael Portillo's TV shows. In this talk, Robert looks at the history of Mr Bradshaw and his "invention" of the railway timetable, and then will take us on an armchair mystery tour using Bradshaw's from 1922. A history mystery tour!
Monday 8 September 2025 **7:30pm**	**Keith Small:** "The English Pottery Industry" - Keith talked to us last year on the subject of the local tobacco industry, and including the large Spital factory here. He returns again to talk about our Brampton/ Chesterfield pottery industry, and placing it in the growth of the wider English pottery history.
Monday 13 October 2025 **7:30pm**	**Steve Flinders:** "The story of the Ilkeston Tramway - 1903-1931" - Ilkeston was the first town in Derbyshire to adopt and operate a fully electrical tramway system – the Chesterfield trams were electrified just a year later.

Other Diary Dates

Monday, 19 May 2025 2:00pm	Geoffrey Tweedale. **Steel and Coal: The Huntsman family in long term perspective 1750s-1950s.** South Yorkshire Industrial History Society, Kelham Island Museum Alma Street, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S3 8RG
Monday 19 May 2025 6:30pm	**'Went the day well? – We plan, the Gods laugh: Success and Failure on D-Day'** by Dr Phil Judkins. Newcomen Society – South Yorkshire Branch. Kelham Island Museum Alma Street, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S3 8RG
Thursday 22 May 2025 7:30pm	**"Oranges and Opium" Richard Barrow of Barrow Hill and Staveley Works fame came to Staveley in 1840, aged 53**. A presentation by Paul Freeman. Brimington & Tapton Local History Society. Brimington Community Centre (next door to the Co-operative Store), High Street, Brimington S43 1DE [Doors open 7:15pm]
Tuesday, 15 July 2025 1:00pm	Talk by Jonathan Aylen, past President of the Newcomen Society - talking about the history of **Chesterfield Tube**. Venue- St Thomas Centre, Chatsworth Road.

NEDIAS visits for 2025

In 2025 a number of spring and summer visits have been proposed and these include:

a. **Sat 17th May**. Guided morning tour of the **Framework Knitting Museum** at Ruddington followed by afternoon tour of Nottingham Industrial Museum at Wollaton Hall. Cliff has already advised by email those on the list of all details and timing.

b. **Thursday 19 June 2025**. **Cromford Canal Cruise**. Cliff will contact all those signed up to advise joining instructions. There is place for just a couple of extra - Email/phone Cliff if you'd like to add your names and join us. Cost is £12.

Top Secret Railways

Martin Allen

Britain's railways have often played a vital logistics role in supporting the armed forces and especially during World War Two. Numerous military establishments, hospitals, factories, and dockyards with railway connections all benefited, as they played their parts in the conflicts to come.

Thorp Arch and the Royal Ordnance Factories

At the declaration of World War Two on 3rd September 1939, the UK only possessed two functional munitions manufacturing factories, one based at Chorley in Lancashire and the other at Rotherwas in Herefordshire, the latter being originally a World War One munitions factory. Investigations of other potential sites for such factories had started in 1936, but no firm decisions had been made to commence the construction of any new facilities. It was not until March 1938 that work started on building a new factory site at Bridgend in Wales. Eventually, on 24th January 1940 the War Cabinet approved a construction programme, which authorised a total of fifteen munitions factories to be built. These became known as Royal Ordinance Factories, or ROF for short. The chosen sites were all in remote locations for obvious reasons, to avoid as far as possible the risks of enemy bombardment and safety from any explosions within the factories

Aerial view of ROF Thorp Arch in 1946. The exchange sidings and carriage sidings are seen on the left. Thorp Arch station is seen north-west from the sidings. [Source: Disused Stations: Royal Ordnance Factory 8 - Thorp Arch]

affecting any local areas of population. Consequently, transport logistics were vital for productivity and especially in sourcing workers from the surrounding areas. One particular location of specific interest to railway enthusiasts would be ROF number 8 at Thorp Arch, near Boston Spa in West Yorkshire. This location was adjacent to the LNER line between Harrogate and Church Fenton and conveniently included an existing passenger station at Thorp Arch itself.

Construction work started on 28th February 1940 and a complex of rail sidings were installed to serve the site, including a large loop line having fully automatic signalling which encapsulated the overall factory complex and allowed passenger trains to call at four intermediate halt platforms around the loop, named respectively Walton, Roman Road, Ranges and River. An important consideration was that the railway facilities could also be put to use during the construction phase, thus eliminating the use of road vehicles and the savings on petrol rationing. The site was to absorb an area of 642 acres and production of munitions at Thorp Arch commenced in May 1941. An average of 18,000 workers would arrive in shifts by train every day. Exchange sidings for freight movements with separate arrivals and departures yards with crossovers onto the main line allowed efficient rail operations. After the war in 1945, Thorp Arch was used by the Ministry of Supply as a distribution centre for returning surplus war materials and equipment from Europe. Later, it became a workshop facility for the storage and maintenance of railway freight wagons.

Beginning in early 1950 war clouds were forming again, resulting in an armed conflict in Korea from 25th June 1950 to 27th July 1953. North Korea invaded South Korea, which was defended by the UK and the USA. Thorp Arch was therefore reopened for active production once again in January 1951 and a year later four hundred workers were fully employed. Thorp Arch finally ceased the production of ordnance in April 1958 and the site was put up for sale in March 1959. It was then acquired by a consortium of local businesses and developed as an industrial estate and a retail park. The site is available to the public today and can

therefore be visited during normal shopping hours. There are still many visible features indicating the earlier history of the complex to be seen, including some short sections of trackwork still embedded in the original concrete surroundings. Of particular note, is the existence of several of the original factory buildings and a concrete base which was once the foundation for an anti-aircraft gun.

Today, any railway modellers looking to build a typical circular layout need look no further than Thorp Arch, if inspiration is needed. A busy self-contained passenger and freight railway with a fascinating history would certainly be a popular and unusual attraction at any model railway exhibition.

Safeguarding the Nation's Museum Treasures

The risks during World War Two of air raids on London and the potential destruction of numerous precious museum artefacts had already been witnessed before, in World War One. However, fears had arisen as early as 1936, that the strength of ariel attacks were then going to be much greater than previously experienced. One of the first considerations was to protect the precious contents of the various museums, libraries, art galleries and archives. In particular, the national treasures of the numerous art galleries were to be a priority, due to the fragile nature of the paintings and their considerable value. A proposal was initially made to evacuate the entire collections to safety in Canada by shipping them across the Atlantic, but the risk of the ships being attacked and sunk en-route by enemy submarines was a real concern. Winston Churchill himself intervened in the matter and ordered that no paintings or other priceless artefacts were to leave the UK for safe keeping, but instead suggested that suitable cellars, tunnels, or caves at locations beyond the reach of enemy bombing, should be used instead.

"Hide them in caves and cellars, but not one picture shall leave this island". (Winston Churchill, 1940). The 'Elephant case' arriving at Manod quarry in Wales, during the Second World War. Original photo GWR . [Source: Manod: The Nation's Treasure Caves | Press | The National Gallery, London]

The initial solution was to evacuate paintings to various stately homes of the nobility in the western areas of the UK and thus out of reach of enemy bombing. However, this was a haphazard arrangement, and the London museums preferred to keep the collections together, so that art experts could keep them under observation and conserved, as necessary. One solution was found in North Wales, where a disused underground slate cavern was evaluated in 1940 and the remote location was found to be ideal, for at least some of the National Gallery collection of paintings. This was at Manod Quarry, near Blaenau Ffestiniog. The paintings were to be packed in waterproof wooden crates and mostly sent out by road transport, however some of the paintings were too large for this option. Consequently, these had to be dispatched from London via. the LMS goods station at Camden Town, where they were loaded onto bogie well wagons. They were then transported by rail as far as Bangor and from there were transferred to low loader lorries by being loaded diagonally, for the final part of the journey. Fortunately, the crates managed to clear the entrance of the cavern with one inch to spare! A light railway of two-foot gauge was laid throughout the complex and four wheeled bogies carrying the crates were shunted around by manpower as required. A total of six prefabricated huts were installed within the quarry, these were intended to store the paintings at an ambient temperature and afforded additional protection. In addition, a separate artists' studio hut was provided for any conservation work. One minor accident occurred in March 1943, when a fall of loose slate from the ceiling of the cavern caused a minor collapse which damaged one of the huts. The paintings themselves were relocated elsewhere within the cavern and following repairs, this hut was converted into a workshop. Fortunately, no other incidents occurred. Similar arrangements were in place with the British Museum, together with the Victoria and Albert Museum, in evacuating artefacts from London. Westwood Quarry near Bradford on Avon in Wiltshire was chosen as the temporary repository for these museums.

The Corsham Stone Quarries and "Codename Burlington"

In 1838, the Great Western Railway began building their main line railway between the cities of Bath and Chippenham. One of the principal feats of civil engineering along the route was the construction of Box Tunnel, near Corsham. When completed in 1841, it was the longest railway tunnel in the world at 1.83 miles. The famous Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-1859) was the chief engineer for the construction. By good fortune during the tunnel excavations, an extensive outcrop of high-quality Bath Stone was discovered. It was then decided to install an adjacent siding in its own independent tunnel parallel to Box Tunnel, in order to allow future exploitation of the stone. The quarry was expanded from 1850 and included its own separate siding connecting with the main line that became fully operational from 1862, the complex was then known as Tunnel Quarry.

The network of tunnels inside the bunker mapped out with an American-style roadmap system. Photo: MoD/Crown Copyright [Source: Cold War Era Bunkers Under Corsham | Amusing Planet]

In WW2, this quarry was requisitioned for military purposes and became a maximum security bunker. This codename title comes from the Burlington Arcade in the west end of London, probably chosen as it was the favourite retail experience for a high-ranking army officer. Now known as Corsham Quarry, the site was still in use by the Ministry of Defence as a secure bunker up until December 2004.

Another nearby stone quarry named Monkton Farleigh was later developed to the east of the city of Bath. A connecting tunnel with a two-foot gauge light railway transported the stone to sidings on the Great Western main line, near the village of Kingsdown. In WW2, Monkton Farleigh quarry was taken over as a storage facility for munitions, especially small arms ammunition and bombs for the RAF.

Preparations for the "D-Day" Invasion of Europe

In World War Two, the three armed services comprised of the Navy, Army and Air Force. However, another vital element was the highly regarded national railway companies, who contributed vital transportation logistics to aid the war effort.

The UK's most "Ultra Top Secret" project of WW2 was doubtless the Allied invasion of Europe in 1944, called "Operation Overlord". Only a selected few top-ranking military officers knew the exact date of "Decision Day," or "D-Day" as we know it today. A key component in the logistics planning was the movement of British, American, and Canadian troops, munitions, and weapons to the various UK ports and onto the waiting landing craft and ships. In this phase, the railways would be a vital resource. At a secret meeting held at the Great Hall of the LMS Euston station in London, it was Field Marshal Montgomery himself, who informed senior representatives from the "Big Four" railway companies of their vital contribution to the forthcoming battles. It is a testimony of the immense confidence that the railways were the only civilian organisation to be entrusted with such vital and most secret information. All the UK train timetables would have to be re-written to prioritise the military traffic, dedicated rolling stock had to be put aside in selected sidings, together with sufficient locomotives and railway staff especially selected.

One difficult issue to overcome, was the necessity of planning and providing adequate rail traffic facilities for the massive supporting armies coming from America and Canada, who would initially be disembarking in various locations around the UK. It was obvious that none of the major existing seaports located in the South-East of England such as Dover, Southampton or Portsmouth could be used, without these activities being spied upon by the enemy and alerting them as to the most likely proximities of the impending invasion points on the shores of mainland Europe. In any case, none of the existing UK ports were found to be suitable as they were already stretched to capacity.

The conclusion was that somewhere along the North-West coastline of the UK would give the best options for reasons of secrecy and also beyond the usual enemy bombing range. Two locations in particular were investigated which would require suitable tidal locations and depths of sea water to accommodate large shipping. The chosen sites were at Faslane and Cairn Ryan on the west coast of Scotland. However, neither of these locations had any existing main line rail connections or other logistical facilities. Consequently, railway branch lines, sidings, locomotive servicing provisions, jetties, dockside cranes etc. were required to serve the ships, by offloading the equipment and disembarking the troops. It is a testimony to the design and robust construction of both these harbours, as they are still in regular usage today. Faslane is now one of the

main bases for the Royal Navy's nuclear submarine fleet. Cairn Ryan has been converted to civilian usage and is now frequented by ferry boats for roll-on/roll-off car traffic which plies between Larne or Belfast in Northern Ireland.

Back in 1944, it was intended that the life span of the harbours at Faslane and Cairn Ryan would only need to be of sufficient service for six months of active war operations for the purposes of D-Day, so they are both to be congratulated for their durability and long service in war and peace!

RIGHT: Cairnryan Military Port

During World War 2, the country needed a 'spare' deep water port on the west coast in case the Clyde in Glasgow or the Mersey in Liverpool became unusable due to enemy action. Loch Ryan was ideal, and Number 2 Military Port was built on its northern shore at Cairnryan between 1941 and 1943.
There were three piers, the main ones being the North Deep and South Deep, and a total of 1.5 miles of quayside. There was also a railway network which connected to the main line at Stranraer. Thankfully, the port was never needed for its original purpose as the other ports remained open throughout the war. However Cairnryan was still an important site as one of the main points for American troop ships to dock.
[Image credit – Imperial War Museum collection – Source: https://www.solwaymilitarytrail.co.uk/trail-attractions/cairnryan-military-port/]

A piece of Chesterfield in Caernarfon

Diana Allen

On a recent visit to the old Victoria Docks in Caernarfon we were pleased to see that the sliding bridge built by Oliver and Co., Chesterfield, between the marina and the dry dock is still fully functioning and beautifully maintained. The dock area is mostly redeveloped and no longer industrial but the marina remains busy - and full of big yachts!

Model maker recreates railway line for centenary

A model maker and train enthusiast has recreated an abandoned railway line 100 years after it first opened.

The Ashover Light Railway was built to take limestone and fluorspar to Clay Cross Iron Works, Derbyshire, along with a passenger service, until the entire line was closed in 1950.

A model train created with a barn, a church and a red train on a track alongside fencing and gates. There is a carriage with iron ore in the foreground. [Image source, David Wright : Image caption: David Wright's model will be on display at various exhibitions]

David Wright, a retired graphic designer, said he spent two years "on and off" recreating the line for a special event to mark its opening in 1925.

The line was built using leftover equipment from the then War Department.

Despite the line being built to carry mineral traffic, its passenger service proved popular in the 1920s but competition from buses saw numbers decline.

Passenger services were withdrawn in 1936 and mineral freight continued until 1950.

Mr Wright, from Hilton near Derby, said his passion for the railways started more than 60 years ago at the age of six when he went along with his father to Derby Museum to see an exhibition.

The model itself shows the Ashover Butts stop where the line terminated.

He said he looked at available photos for the work but because the line was not open for long, there were limited resources to model it from.

Mr Wright said he started it two years ago but began to focus on other projects. As the anniversary drew nearer, he spent the last four months on it.

"I've always had a big interest, I did another similar model a few years ago and decided to do it again," he added.

"My passion is still there in making model railways, I really enjoy it and I always strive to make a model as realistic as possible but you can't always make things true to scale because of room.

Mr Wright's model was on display on 5 and 6 April at Ashover Light Railway's 100th Anniversary Exhibition in the Bassett Rooms, Ashover.

It will also be on display at events in Bakewell in June and Buxton in July.

Pillboxes – Stopline 5 and Pillboxes of FW Type 24

Cliff Lea

It's over 100 years ago now that Pillboxes appeared all over the country, particularly close to military and manufacturing centres during WWII. These were mostly small fortified concrete structures used as anti-invasion defences – often camouflaged and with slots and windows for firing weapons and for observation.

Thousands of these are still around, there are local groups researching their history and in many cases there are groups conserving and re-purposing the sites.

During WWII there was a plan to have a "coastal crust" of defended beaches, backed up by a network of "stop lines" which would limit any incursion, with localised defences for "vulnerable points". The War Office in 1940 set up the "Fortifications and Works" (FW) division and raised basic pillbox designs which were granted a Type number, i.e. FW Type 24.

Typical FW Type 24 pillbox

Apparently some 28,000 pillboxes were built and it's said about a quarter of these survive, many in lines protecting strategic sites.. There is quite an active "Pillbox Study Group" see [www. http://www.pillbox-study-group.org.uk/](http://www.pillbox-study-group.org.uk/), who produce regular newsletter. See their map of "Stop Lines" of multiple pillboxes in defensive positions; most stop lines are near the south and east coasts, but one "Stop Line 5" stretches around the southern boundaries of Derbyshire close to the Trent.

Pillbox Stopline New

The Staffordshire Wildlife Trust have taken quite an interest in the pillboxes of Stop Line 5 and are identifying and looking to re-purpose them for use by wildlife, particularly bats, swallows and wild birds. These pillboxes are of FW Type 24 type – constructed of reinforced concrete, and positioned to defend crossing points of the Rivers Trent, Tame and Dove.

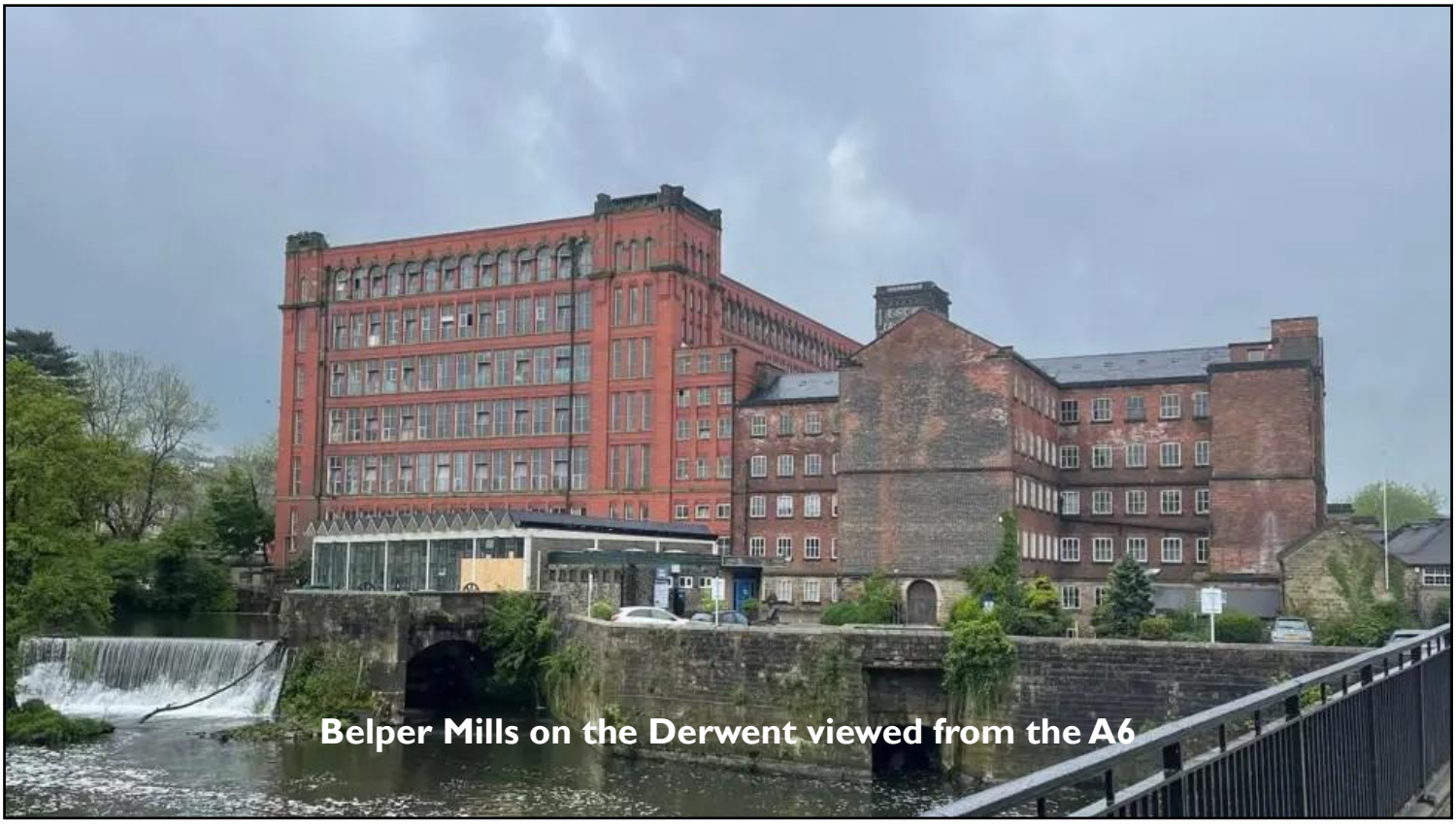
Often they're in remote places, long forgotten, neglected and overgrown with brambles and nettles. You can see more on the web site www.thetrentvalley.org.uk

One such (DCC Monument record MDR71 - Cairn and Type FW3/23 Pillbox) was built at High Edge Raceway north of Hartington, probably part of a stop line of three, where it was built on top of and where its construction mutilated a bronze age cairn and barrow.

So where are the pillboxes in Derbyshire and closer to us here? Those protecting Sheffield? Do you have photos?

RIGHT: Pillbox at High Edge, built on top of bronze age structures, Chrome Hill in background.

Fears that plan for crumbling mills will be 'unviable'



Belper Mills on the Derwent viewed from the A6

Campaigners have said they fear plans to save the crumbling Belper Mills in Derbyshire will be too costly to carry out.

The Georgian mills, a key part of the Derwent Valley Mills Unesco World Heritage Site, are in "poor condition" having stood largely derelict for decades.

Roger Moors, chair of Our Belper Mills, said he would be "delighted to see a viable redevelopment started", but was concerned the repair bill could thwart plans to rejuvenate the site.

First Investment Real Estate Management (FI), owners of the site, said plans would be submitted to Amber Valley Borough Council in the coming months, and added it had been "proactively engaging with key stakeholders throughout".

An application for the site to convert the mills into apartments, as well as ground floor commercial uses, was submitted in 2018 but not determined.

Mr Moors, chair of the group, which is part of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site (DVMWHS) Partnership, said the site was "a blot on the landscape" but was wary that any scheme brought forward needs to not only be respectful of the heritage of the buildings, but also be self-funding.

In 2024, Derbyshire County Council commissioned an independent report on behalf of the DVMWHS, which found the heritage costs would put the overall redevelopment about £20m in the red.

The report found it was "unlikely" any scheme for the North and East Mills buildings could be "delivered by the private sector alone".

Rusted machinery at the mill site
The condition of the mills has been raised by Unesco

Our Belper Mills said FI contested this, as savings would be made by them carrying out most of the restoration work in-house.

Derek Latham, chair of DVMWHS member Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust, said he was "sceptical" over the redevelopment plans, which he described as "unviable".

"Since 2003 we've tried to put pressure on for basic repairs to be undertaken and they haven't been done," he added.

Broken windows on a mill building's frontage
Fears have been raised that the heritage costs will make the plan unviable.

FI said it was "very proud" to be investing in Belper Mills by developing "a complex proposal" to be submitted later this year.

A spokesperson said: "We are in the process of finalising a revised heritage report with Historic England and have been proactively engaging with key stakeholders throughout.

"The proposals and evidence will then be assessed by Unesco to receive its decision on our plans for Belper Mills, which we hope will happen over the next few months."

The borough council said it would determine the application for "a very important part of our country's industrial heritage".

A spokesperson added: "The council is keen to work closely with the owner to ensure its protection."

HELP REQUIRED!

We have received a couple of queries from our readers, which you may be able to solve!

A) From Ray Marsh

I have puzzled over this feature in the landscape for years. It is built of early breeze blocks, about 5ft x 5ft square, 10 ft high. Stands in a field on the high ground by the roadside a mile or so west (in the Baslow direction) of the Lineacre Reservoirs, near Freebirch Farm and Hare Edge, GR 304725.

So, it is on the high ground, near water reservoir... is it a sighting tower? is it something to do with services underneath? water? electricity?

Please put me out of my misery!! Let Cliff know your answers for the next Newsletter.

B) From Martin Allen

I'm doing some research on what might well be the oldest rail bridge in the UK. There was a separate branch line from the Ticknall Tramroad at Calke, which served various lead and limestone quarries at Ashby from about 1780s. This enterprise was established by Sir Henry Harpur. The quarries were exhausted by early in the 1891s and consequently the line was permanently closed. If the bridge still exists, in my view it could be eligible for being "the oldest bridge".

Do you know someone that is familiar with this area and if so, perhaps they could investigate if this bridge is still there or not?

If you are able to help then we would be pleased to receive your comments.

Thank you, in anticipation.

And finally ….
…. Lord Byron's daughter, a great achiever! Ada Lovelace

Cliff Lea

In March I was in Somerset, exploring an estate previously owned by Ada. So who was this Ada?

The romantic poet Lord Byron had one legitimate child Ada born to his wife Annabella, 11th Baroness Wentworth in 1815. Ada's mother was an educational reformer and abolitionist who sparked interest in the sciences and mathematics in their daughter Ada. By age 18 Ada when she was at a soiree in London met the polymath and mathematician Charles Babbage and the two became friends through a deep mutual interest in maths.

Two years later at age 20, Ada married William Mark, later to become 1st Earl Lovelace. Lovelace had bought a hunting estate in Somerset near Porlock (yes, the one I explored this year), and with considerable cash inherited by Ada from her parents, Lord and Lady Byron, the Lovelaces developed the grounds and gardens. They created paths, tunnels where the gardeners could move around the grounds unobserved - in fact rather like the gardeners' tunnel at Calke Abbey. In fact Ada had her own private path and tunnel down to a pool at the beach where she could bathe unobserved.

Over the years, Charles Babbage was to visit many times, and it's said he and Ada ambled deep in discussion through the garden paths (the locals later called these paths "the Philosophers' paths"), discussing their shared interest in maths and in calculating; they discussed Babbage's "Difference Engine" and "Analytical Engine", said to be the earliest successful programmable mechanical computer. The Analytical Engine of course borrowed the idea of punched cards from Jacquard = these were used in weaving looms for complex patterned cloth such as reps and velvets.

Ada Lovelace was to go on later when writing up an account and description of the analytical engine, to speculate even further. Between 1842 and 1843, Ada translated an article by the Italian engineer Luigi Menabrea (who later became Prime minister of Italy) about Babbage's Analytical Engine, supplementing it with many of her own notes. Ada Lovelace's notes are important in the early history of computing, her notes contained what many consider to be the very first computer program – that is, an algorithm designed to be carried out by a machine.

Ada was to die too soon – she passed away at age just 36, in fact the same age as her father had died, and she was buried alongside him in the Byron family vault at Hucknall parish church, Nottingham. Not too far away from us here.

And Finally … she would probably have been delighted that a computer programming language developed a century or so later in the 1970s was to be titled "Ada" in her memory. "Ada" was developed for the US Dept of Defence to replace over 450 programming languages which the US military used at that time.

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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