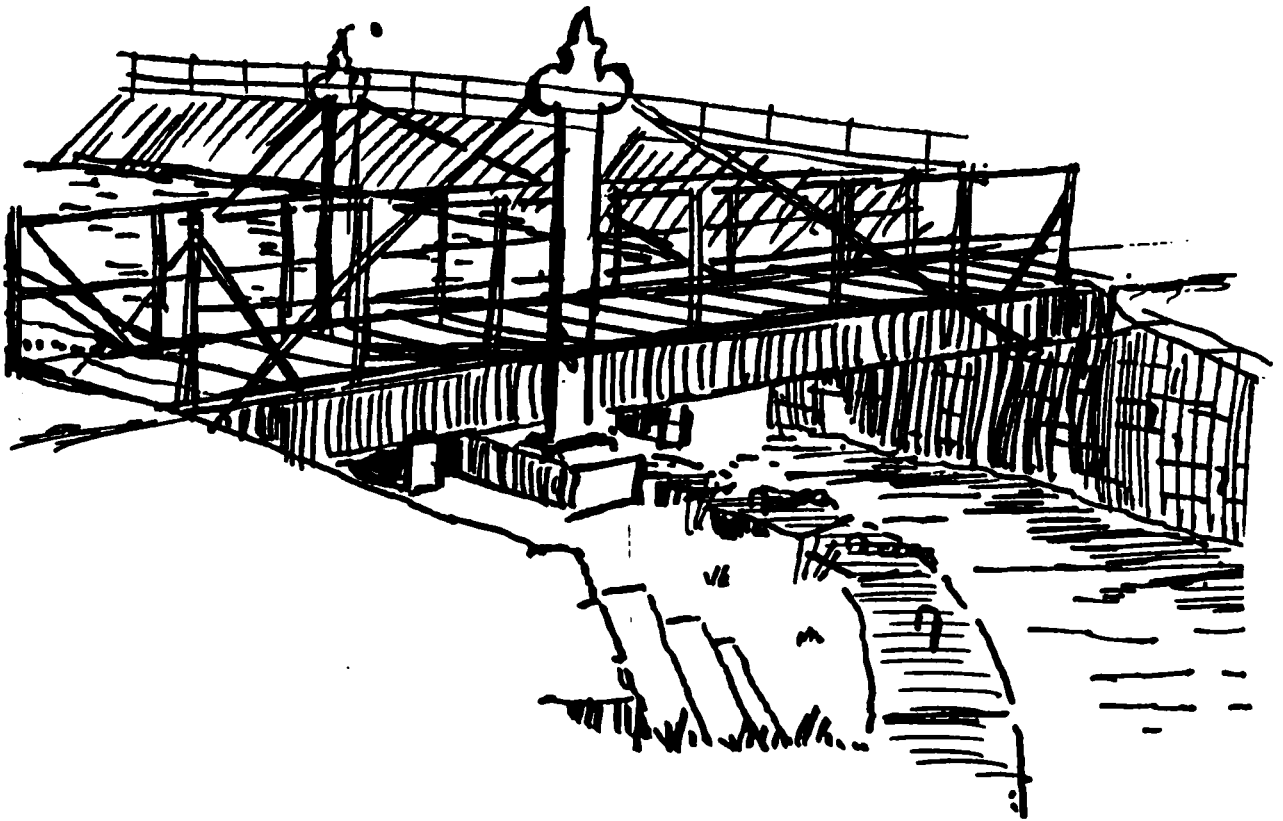


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GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY
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The Aims of the Society:

To stimulate interest in, to record, to study, and where appropriate to preserve items of industrial archaeology, especially in the County of Gloucester.

EDITORIAL

The year 1992 was scheduled to be important for many reasons. For GSIA, it was the year the Society hosted the annual AIA Conference. It was successful thanks to the efforts of our members and more details are to be found in my report on the AIA.

1992 was also the two hundredth anniversary of first meeting which resulted in the Act of Parliament for Gloucester's Canal and Hugh Conway-Jones has written an excellent account of this.

1992 was the year in which England and France were finally linked by the Channel Tunnel or rather the first stages of what will be a rail link. Therefore, it is appropriate to take a look at an earlier proposition to link the two countries. So we have Jim Simmons article on A Channel Bridge.

On a more academic note are the papers by Stephen Mills on the Gloucester engineering company of Fielding and Platt, and Ray Wilson on Electricity Generation at Longford's Mill. Both show important aspects: Fielding and Platt remain in business despite difficult times and it is appropriate to record their history. Longford's Mill is regrettably unused but the importance of its power generating equipment and the unique collection it forms is recorded here.

A somewhat different aspect in industrial archaeology is the recording of nautical subjects and so it is good to see a paper on the recording of one of the Purton derelicts, the barge HARRIETT. Stuart Bryan and Judith Hague show the different aspects which have to be considered in such work.

Finally there is a short piece which records the ingenuity of Gloucester people during an earlier period: Russell Howes on Making Ammunition in the English Civil War.

The year 1992 has not all been success and happiness. There is for example no report on Dunkirk Mills because the recession has meant there is no progress to report. On a national level there are proposed major changes to English Heritage site ownership and the resultant uproar. The affect on industrial sites, in particular, will only become apparent with time.

Amber Patrick

Our cover illustrations thanks to Pat Lane who always provides us with such fine drawings. Thanks are also due to Ray Wilson for help with production.

SUMMER VISITS 1992

VISIT TO CLEEVE HILL

Saturday 4 April 1992

Our first visit of the season attracted 17 members and took the form of a very pleasant and interesting walk over Cleeve Common and the settlement known as Cleeve Hill. The leader was David Aldred who has recently published a detailed history of Cleeve Hill. The remains of industry in the neighbourhoods are now scant but there were plenty of other features to interest us.

We did meet, appropriately enough, in the public car park next to the golf course. This is the site of the most recently closed quarries on the hill. Operations ceased here in the early part of this century. On our walk Mr Aldred described a fascinating network of roads including one shown on the famous Oglivy Strip Map of 1675. We looked at the more extensive quarry remains at Cleeve Cloud where the remains of an old winch could be seen. From here we dropped back down to the main road and walked back up the hill and learnt about some of the more interesting houses that we passed. Back at the car park in the quarry we thanked Mr Aldred for a most interesting and informative morning.

Ray Wilson

VISIT TO KEW AND LONDON DOCKLANDS

31 May 1992.

Once again we had a fully booked coach (and a waiting list) for our first long outing.

Light traffic meant we had to wait a few minutes to get into our first location, the Kew Bridge Steam Museum.

Here there is a very good display on the development of London's water supply and a fine collection of steam engines formerly used in waterworks (plus of course the odd extra engines which such places acquire).

The dates of manufacture of the main exhibits range from 1820 to 1910, though some have been modified and moved between various sites during their working lives.

Some of the smaller engines are run more or less continuously and provide considerable contrasts in size and style, from the fairly high speed vertical triple expansion Hathorn & Davey engine, through the cross-compound "Wadden" engine (with a delightful twin cylinder barring engine) to the smaller beam engines.

Pride of place however must go to the massive Cornish engines with cylinders up to 100 inch diameter. By modern technical standards these engines may be over-designed and very inefficient but they provide a magnificent sight when in motion.

The Museum staff very obligingly altered the running timetable for the big engines so that we could see two of them started up. This is no simple matter of opening a valve, the driver must operate the valve gear by hand until steady conditions have been established. When one realises that the length of stroke of these massive pistons is determined by operation of the valve gear a driver's first "solo" start must be a nerve wracking experience.

From Kew we moved into central London and picked up Dr Bob Carr on Waterloo Bridge. We were then given an expertly guided tour of the former northern Dockland. On the Isle of Dogs we passed the currently newsworthy Canary Wharf development. We had a walk through the "Skin Floor" at Tobacco Wharf with vast complicated cast iron and timber roof (listed) over a five vaulted basement, now converted into two floors of shopping, etc (largely empty).

We walked through housing developments built into former docks (at about half depth level), with water features built in.

The various office and residential buildings covered a wide range of styles (some more successful than others!).

The track and further extensions of the Docklands Light Railway were seen in many places.

Our furthest east was the old North Woolich railway station, now a museum of the Great Eastern Railway. After a too brief look at this collection most of us crossed the Thames on the ferry, with a view of the Thames Flood Barrier and many walked back under the river by the pedestrian subway.

Our return to the M4 was on a different route with the sight of, and an able commentary on, yet more changes in the old way of life. We crossed to the south side of the river and came through Southwark where road-works and diversions gave our driver some tricky moments in roads which were not designed for 53 seater coaches.

While we may not be completely happy with the changes in Gloucester Docks we still have a navigable (and used) waterway and the main structures are still there.

We were later than programmed but it was generally agreed that it had been a varied and worthwhile day.

Jim Simmons

VISIT TO PURTON AND SHARPNESS DOCKS

Saturday 13 June 1992

It turned out to be one of the hottest afternoons of the year for what could only be a very leisurely stroll in delightful surroundings. Our aim was to walk the three miles between Purton on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal and the entrance gates to Sharpness New Docks. Although this was familiar territory to some of the members we thought it important to look again at the development proposals by British Waterways for the Old Dock area and nearby canal.

The party of 17 assembled at the car park at Purton Upper Bridge. This was a good vantage point for the leader, Ray Wilson, to describe the attractive bridge keepers house built in a Neo-classical style, the church, some fine houses and the two swing bridges across the canal. We crossed the lower bridge and passed first the Berkeley Hunt pub by the canal side and then after a few yards the Berkeley Arms pub at the riverside. Just visible at the latter are the upper two or three steps of a much longer flight which were originally required to descend from the bank down to the salting. Deposition has now brought the salting almost up to the level of the bank.

From here we made our way along the foreshore passing the 'graveyard' of old river vessels. They were beached here to help stabilise the bank. Some of these are concrete barges dating from World War II. Stuart Bryan and Judith Hague told us about the history of the barge HARRIET which lies alone at the southern end of the 'grave yard'.

We passed the abutments and swing bridge pillar from the old Severn Railway bridge demolished in the 1960s after the collision of two barges with the bridge and we were soon at the

canal arm. It was clear how the character of this area would be changed if British Waterways succeeded in their development. We were also concerned that the Old Dock Master's house was continuing to deteriorate.

Moving over to the New Docks it was sad that there was not a commercial vessel in sight. We could see piles of granite setts on the quayside, from Portugal. This is one of the few regular cargoes at present. Our tour concluded with a look at the single remaining large 19th century warehouse, the two concrete grain silos, company housing in Dock Road and of course the tidal basin and entrance lock. It had been a most pleasant walk but we were greatly relieved to reach the cars that had been brought round by shuttle at the beginning of the afternoon. Few could have faced the walk back in that heat.

Ray Wilson

VISIT TO HAMPSHIRE

Sunday 5 July 1992

Our 'midsummer' trip took us south where we were to meet near Whitchurch by our guide, John Silman of Southampton IA Group.

We went first to the Hampshire County Museum store and workshops on the outskirts of Winchester where three of the staff had kindly come in especially to show us round. The main store is an interesting building in its own right as it was an early indoor riding school. This is crammed full of all sorts of historic vehicles and other items. Space limitations at the museums within the county mean that these items cannot be on permanent display and are only accessible to pre-arranged parties like ourselves.

The most important collection is probably the group of steam traction engines built locally by Taskers. There is also an extensive agricultural collection here. The exhibits are both maintained and if necessary restored on site. We were able to view the workshops where this carried out to a high standard. It is perhaps a sign of the times that a significant amount of work is now carried out for external customers. This provides a useful income but of course detracts from work on the exhibits.

The lunch stop was taken in Winchester and we travelled south to Bursledon Windmill which is situated just north of Southampton. This very fine tower mill has been recently restored. After an introductory talk and video we split into groups to view the superb quality of the restoration. Unfortunately, Health and Safety Regulations meant that we could not see the mill actually at work.

Our final call took us to Twyford Waterworks where a very active Trust have been restoring the buildings and machinery. Much of the steam plant has been preserved including the Hathorn Davey triple expansion steam engine. Although it cannot be steamed at present. Members of the Trust were on hand to show us over the site with its extensive water softening plant, five lime kilns and even a small inclined tramway.

Here we said farewell to our guide. John had provided a host of information on the places we had passed during the day and he was warmly thanked for giving us such a varied and enjoyable day.

Ray Wilson

SOCIAL EVENING - MINCHINHAMPTON

Thursday 6 August 1992

All 24 places were soon taken up for our social evening which this year took the form of a walk round the old Cotswold woollen town of Minchinhampton. The limit had to be set for safety reasons because of the narrow pavements in several parts of the town. We were fortunate to have as our guide Mr Cyril Turk the chairman of the Minchinhampton Local History Society.

We started near the Market House and were immediately surprised to learn that a second market house had stood next door until it was demolished in 1919.

This was one of the few changes to affect the centre of Minchinhampton. We learnt that new roads in the 18th century through the valleys to the north and south had left the town isolated and locked in its 18th century past. More recent developments have all been on the outskirts of the town leaving the central region relatively unaltered.

Our route took us through the main streets and also along narrow lanes and alleyways. At each stop there was an interesting story to be told and at the edge of the town there were delightful views of the surrounding countryside.

After thanking Mr Turk at the end of the walk we all travelled the short distance to the hamlet of Pinfarthings where Geoff and Maggie Annis welcomed us to their home. Here we were treated to coffee or wine and a fine spread of light refreshments. We must record our thanks to them for their hospitality which ensured the second part of the social evening was a great success.

Ray Wilson.

VISIT TO FROCESTER COURT

Saturday 22 August 1992

Twenty five members gathered alongside the magnificent stone built tithe barn at Frocester court. We were met by the owner, Mr Eddie Price, farmer, archaeologist and building restorer. Mr Price started by giving us a history of the occupation of the area from prehistoric times to the present.

We then crossed the road to the Frocester excavation (started 1961). The currently opened section has re-exposed part of the Roman mosaic. Another section showed clearly medieval ridge and furrow beneath the modern surface.

Moving to the farm complex we examined the construction of the massive tithe barn (one of the largest in the country at 186 feet by 30 feet, internal dimensions). Of particular interest was the description of the 19th century water turbine (not accessible) by Whitlaw and Stirritt which powered barn and dairy machinery.

Finally Mr Price took us around the farm and domestic buildings where we could admire his handiwork in the restoration of most of the buildings, particularly the rooves. One special building is the medieval pigeon house. Mr Price was thanked for a most interesting and informative visit.

Ray Wilson

VISIT TO LEICESTERSHIRE

Sunday 27 September 1992

The final coach trip of the year took us back to Leicestershire for the first time for many years. At two sites we were able to see improvements brought about by local groups in recent years and at the third we visited the new Snibston Discovery Park with its considerable industrial content. This was originally intended to be an industrial museum but its brief widened considerably before it opened in June 1992.

We made rapid progress via the M5 and M42 and soon found ourselves standing at the top of the Swannington Incline near Coalville. Here we met our guide, Denis Baker of the Swannington Heritage Trust and he explained how the Leicester and Swannington Railway was built in 1832 to carry coal. We saw the remains of the engine house and then descended the incline for a distance of about half a mile. Near the bottom we saw the

fine stone arched bridge which carries the incline and has been repaired by the Trust with the assistance of British Coal.

It was barely two miles to the main stop at Snibston. The site is a former colliery which has been developed by the County Council as a major tourist attraction. The main themes are Leicestershire's Industrial and Social History and a huge array of "hands -on" scientific exhibits. It is these latter items which give rise to the name "Discovery" and are, I can confirm, suitable for "children of all ages".

The industrial exhibits concentrated on coal, textiles, shoe manufacture together with displays of transport and smaller industries and were all well laid out.

The Museum's curator, Stuart Warburton, had attended the AIA Conference at Cirencester just two weeks before and he kindly agreed to meet our party. On our arrival, he gave an introductory talk on the museum and then after viewing the galleries we split into two groups to visit the pit top and winding gear which are not yet open to the public.

It was an hour's drive to our final stop, Foxton Locks, so we chose the direct route through Leicester passing the grim exterior of the gaol. There we were met by Mike Beech who is the first paid curator of the small canal museum on site. He took us on a tour of the flight of 10 locks through which the Grand Union Canal ascends some 75 feet in two groups of five locks. The congestion in commercial days was apparent from the activity of today's pleasure craft. We then saw the remains of the incline of 1899. This was designed to cut the transit time between the two levels from about an hour to a little over ten minutes. The canal craft were floated into tanks which were raised and lowered between the two levels in pairs. The system was therefore self acting but a steam engine was needed to overcome friction with the cables and pulleys.

Back at the bottom level we could enjoy the distinctive architecture of the canal buildings and bridge. Most of us did some "gong gozling", as the expert and not so expert made their way through the locks.

But we could not stay too long as there was still the excellent little museum to visit. The prize exhibit here is a working model of the incline. The museum is housed in the rebuilt boiler house which shows what the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust can do. Their ultimate objective is to restore the incline to full working order. At the moment that seems an impossibility but who knows.

By now we were starting to get behind schedule so reluctantly we boarded the coach and again making full use of the motorways we were soon back at Gloucester after what had been a very full but enjoyable day.

Ray Wilson

VISIT TO THE FOREST OF DEAN

Sunday 11 October 1992

There was a fine turn out of 40 members and friends for our last event of the season. We were again fortunate to have Ian Standing, curator at the Dean Heritage Museum as our guide in the Forest. This time the Wimberry Slade area near Cannop Ponds was chosen.

We met at the Cannop Colliery site and with the aid of maps and photographs Ian interpreted the remains of the site. The shafts were started in 1906 and the colliery operated from about 1910 to 1960. Moving up the valley we passed the Cannop drift. This had been driven in c1906 to enable the company to get some coal to help finance the sinking of the new shafts. A little higher up Wimberry Slade we reached Hopewell freemine. Here we saw how concrete had been used to construct a mine entrance rather than by more traditional methods. Near here the inter-change sidings for the upper part of the Wimberry tramroad with the branch from the Severn and Wye railroad. The latter had been built to serve Wimberry Colliery. The tramroad continued to serve the numerous coal mining and quarrying concerns in the higher reaches of Wimberry Slade. At head of the tramroad was Wimberry Quarry which operated in the 19th century and was later used as a rifle range. Our short cut gave us one or two steep descents and we were soon back. Most of us took up the offer of a short walk to a fine group of Weymouth Pines. It is said that those were planted in 1780 and thus are the first conifers planted in Dean. The diversion brought the walk to a good end and Ian was thanked for giving us a most interesting afternoon.

Ray wilson.