



# BERKSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

**BIAG News No 32, Summer 2014**

**Editor: John Coulson**

<http://www.biag.org.uk>

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## **WHERE HAVE ALL THE BIAG`S GONE...FAR FAR AWAY!**

**Peter Trout**

One can enjoy a visit or activity as a personal indulgence, as a social event, or both. In the event of the Reading Industrial Walk and "From Pillar to Post", the London Post Office perambulation, it was effectively the first option.

The Industrial Walk was the one done for Heritage Days (this year three were undertaken attracting about sixty people who seemed to enjoy it – even those braving the Friday downpour). A BIAG walk had been suggested by members and the idea was to finish with a Pie and a Pint. Support for the event was disappointing but did attract an ex-BIAG member, a Japanese professor who studied at Reading University.

Support for "From Pillar to Post" was even more dire although several members expressed interest but apologised because of other commitments. It was an excellent and stimulating tour of significant parts of the City. It reminded us of the magnitude of the Post Office enterprise comprising mail, UK and foreign (mail packet ships to airmail), telegraph and telephone, post offices, parcels etc etc. – now split up and largely privatised. Dafyd, our guide, gave us ample historical background as well as minutiae of the organisation together with fascinating offshoots.

For these last, two mentions shall suffice. The Post Office Rifles had origins before WWI. What was the PO link with the last Newgate public hanging. Auden and Britten went to the same school with a PO connection – Leap forward to the PO Film Unit's classic documentary "Night Mail".

Big and small. Huge buildings took up a significant part of the Square Mile – but what has the Bull and Mouth to do with them? A visit to the site of Lloyd's Coffee House created another link..

To smaller matters, especially street furniture which we can pass or indeed use without really looking. A perforated crown sounds painful but....The Ascent of K2! What is a K2 and the floor descent will be left, delicately, to one side. Mr Handyside was true to his name – hand, handy and on the side(nice sense) but what did he manufacture?

Moving to people there is a Reading link with Sir John Soane. A more important link in the story is Rowland Hill. Oh yes! – the Penny Black and all that...all that includes London postal districts eg EC or SW. A cryptic link could be made between Jackson's Corner (payment) and early movement of mail for sorting.

As I write, the shops are packed with Christmas cards. How did they start (and startle over a glass of wine) and why are "robins", not to mention mail coaches, such an important feature?.

Yes, a packed 2½ hours of entertaining and illuminating information. If you are intrigued by the few riddles set, do ask – but better still take the opportunity of joining a future group.

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## **BIAG VISIT TO JACKSONS (19 December 2013)**

**John Coulson**

On the afternoon of Thursday 19 December, just before the venerable Jackson's store on the corner of Kings Road & Market Place closed for the last time on Christmas Eve, a group of BIAG members gathered in their Accounts Dept to inspect their Lamson tube system, one of the last that is (now was?) still operational in the country.



The right hand picture shows the tube carriers into which the bill & money for a purchase were placed. The tube was then put into a station terminal in the appropriate store department and was delivered via the vacuum tube to the Accounts Dept station shown in the left hand picture. The tube carriers were delivered into the wooden semicircular trough beneath the vertical tubes. The Accounts staff would log the purchase, receipt the bill and put this, together with any change (and we saw an occasional sweet!) back into the carrier. They would then put the carrier back into the appropriate vertical tube for the department (these were numbered from 1 to 9 and there was a directory posted next to the tubes showing which number corresponded to which store department). The carrier was then delivered back to the terminal in the department. We were then guided into the basement of the store (a real rabbit warren of rooms!) to see the vacuum pump driving the system.

A fascinating visit and we are most grateful to Jackson`s and all their friendly staff for spending the time to show us round and answering our many and varied questions at a time that must have been quite difficult for them. Our thanks and best wishes to them all.

## NOT ON YOUR K(N)ELLY

### Peter Trout

An absorbing time! For an hour I browsed the 1925 HULL & DISTRICT TRADES DIRECTORY with pleasure and deep interest. Although Hull or as the city insists Kingston upon Hull (no hyphens) is my home city and nostalgia played a part in my pleasure - nevertheless an almost vanished world was displayed.

It would be tedious to fully list and comment here so in the spirit of serendipity a few items are culled from the mass.

Early on, basket makers caught my eye — seven of them (similar to Blake St in Reading). Wellstead BOOTERIES was among the scores of boot and shoe makers. In greater numbers were bakers ( the best before sliced bread) and in the seed-crushing world centre there were many related activities eg Rose Down & Thompson (Engineers), Blundells Paints and Halls (they advertised by the railway with 2 life sized men carrying a ladder). Varnish makers were obviously included among the fifty seed-crushing oil firms. Clarence Mills still stand - the only flour millers left. Joseph Rank started in a windmill in Holderness, eventually pioneered roller mills and built a huge milling empire. Questions abound - for example what is a rice grinder— polished rice or ground rice or ?

A large range of trades revolved round the docks and shipping. Boilers attracted many different processes plus steel and wooden (still!) shipbuilding of both barges and ships - Earles built ships for Wilson Line, One could move from trawlers to fish curers and fish & chip shops and miss related activities, such as rope makers.

Lots more to beguile - Handcart hirers, rabbit skin merchants, paper bag makers, motor body builders but indicating more local and regional activity compared with the present national and multinational megaliths.

To move from the anonymous I select just a few

**T. Airey** - clog maker, **W.J. Cave** - flag maker, **James & Co** - hemp manufacturer

**Crossley Bros** - gas engine makers, **T.W. Garner** - sack maker, **C. Pearson** - mast maker

**C Roberts & Co** - railway wagon makers, **H. Solomon** - briar pipe maker, **J. Stonehouse** - clay pipes

**Jamilsons** - lamp manufacturer, **Leeds FireClay Co** - fire bricks

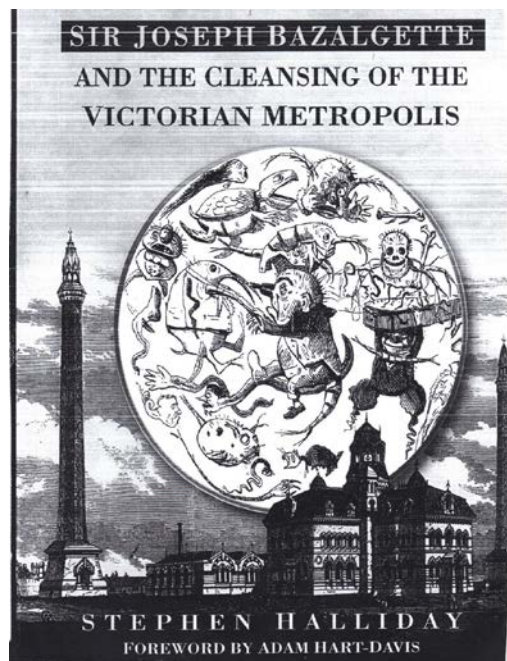
Kelly's and other directories are widely available in local libraries (Reading has a bookcase full). For a little sedentary IA you can pore over these volumes for knowledge and insights or just spend a speculative hour - you never know what may be of value. On a final note, when BIAG gave presentations on 'Caversham - 100yrs On' it was surprising what economic activity emerged from Kelly's pages

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## BOOKSHELF

**Peter Trout .**

### **THE GREAT STINK OF LONDON - Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the Cleansing of the Victorian Metropolis STEPHEN HALLIDAY, Sutton Press 1999**



It was when BIAG was invited to a Civil Engineers' meeting that I first became aware of Bazalgette's great achievements. They were truly outstanding not least for the sewerage system, still within the present one, and which has literally saved countless lives considering past cholera epidemics (see cartoon). Brunel, Stephenson, Rennie and others are well known names with statues, memorials and biographies. Bazalgette has a small plaque near Charing Cross on the Victoria Embankment (one of his great successes).

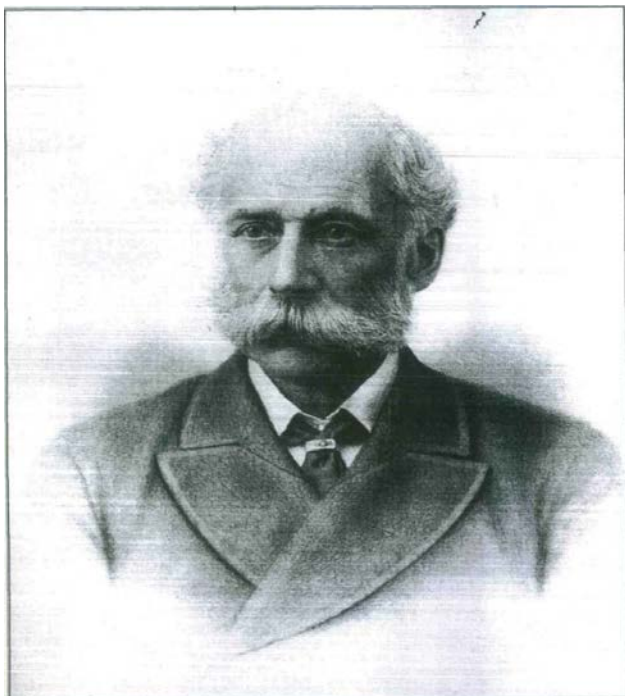
Yet there is no Victorian three volume biography and virtually nothing until this volume which is not a biography but an account of Joseph and a history of the attempts to make London healthier.

The Great Stink(s) of 1858 etc almost drove Parliament from Westminster and Henley on Thames was mooted as a venue. The stench in their nostrils stimulated the politicians into action (no comment!!)

What action? The book deals fascinatingly but stomach churningly with the sewage and health problems. It gives account of the public works undertaken mostly under the supervision of Bazalgette as Chief Engineer but also absorbingly and frustratingly with the politics and personalities.

The great pumping stations built for sewage disposal became redundant and neglected. They were incredible buildings, indeed palaces. My understanding is that efforts at restoration are underway but that is another story.

The one narrated in this book is highly recommended. It is well written and lavishly illustrated but behind it is an enormous amount of research. The author is/was a lecturer at Buckingham Business School with interests in both business and IA. I am happy to lend my copy to members - perhaps the Newsletter can be used both for book reviews and as a means of exchange.



Sir Joseph Bazalgette, about 1880  
(From a picture in the possession of Rear Admiral  
Derek Bazalgette CB [Derek Bazalgette] )



DEATH'S DISPENSARY  
Open to the Poor, Gratis. By Permission of the Parish

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## South Wales and West of England IA Conference Kidderminster - 12th April 2014 (and some other interesting finds in the surrounding area)

### Janet Johnson

Unfortunately this conference was on the same day as the SERIAC conference; however we thought the programme looked interesting and opted for a week in Worcestershire. The conference was held in a large school in Kidderminster with excellent speaker facilities.

#### **The history of the Kidderminster Carpet Industry** by Melvyn Thompson

Melvyn Thompson is the historian at the carpet museum and has spent all his working life in the Carpet Industry, beginning as an engineering apprentice; he then worked on the development of machinery for weaving synthetic yarns at ICI Pontypool, returning to Kidderminster for the rest of his career.

He traced the development of carpets from the already established cloth industry in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Kidderminster is well situated near to a supply of wool, and water, for dyeing and fulling. The industry continued to grow and by the 1950s there were over 30 carpet manufacturers with a huge work force, about 25,000. Gradually the industry declined due to competition from abroad and public changing tastes in carpets. Today there are only 2 manufacturers left. Two fine industrial buildings have been incorporated in a shopping centre.

Melvyn then went on to outline the setting up of the carpet museum following a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. At the end of the day we visited the museum which contains 2 working looms, one of which was in action.

#### **The Post Office in the First World War** by Chris Taft

This talk had special interest for this area following an exhibition called "Last Post" recently opened in Ironbridge Gorge, and runs until March 2015. A partnership of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum and the British Postal Museum and Archive, staged the exhibition to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. Chris Taft is Head of collections at the Postal Museum.

The GPO was used by the Government to distribute recruitment forms and in 1917 ration books. The Post Office had its own battalion, The Post Office Rifles. 12,000 men joined, 1,800 were killed and many wounded. The volume of mail was enormous as letters were essential for the morale of soldiers and their families. A temporary sorting office was erected on 5 acres of Regents Park. At its height 12.5 million letters were sorted and sent to the front every week. 2,500 women were employed to sort them. 35,000 women were recruited for

censoring letters and many other duties. The Post Office paid 2.7 million separation allowances every week. This just gives a taste of the tremendous task undertaken. The end of WW1 also saw the end of the penny post; a halfpenny was added to the cost of a stamp. This was a fascinating talk.

### **The Kidderminster Railway Museum** by David Postle

David is curator of the museum. The museum contains a collection of railway memorabilia, housed adjacent to Kidderminster station not to be confused with the Severn Valley Railway, SVR, which has the Engine House Visitor Centre at Highley Station.

The museum was started by a group of volunteers from the SVR using much of their own collections and first opened in 1990. The collection is housed in a warehouse built by the GWR in 1878 to store grain on the ground floor, and wool for carpets on the upper floor. Gradually, with many fund raising activities and some grants, they have restored the building, and by studying original drawings it is now open in original build condition. It contains a vast collection of artefacts including clocks, timetables, name and number engine plates, station name boards, signalling and telephone displays. A photographic archive is available on request containing 150,000 prints and 25,000 colour slides. How many pictures of steam engines do you have?

We visited the museum during our week in Worcester and it is a real Aladdin's cave.

### **The Introduction of Technology to the Country House** by Ian West

Ian West became a Chartered Engineer in 1979 and worked in senior positions in several industries. In 2002 he studied for a MA in Industrial Archaeology. He worked with Marilyn Palmer, Professor of Archaeology at Leicester University, on the Country House Technology Project. This talk outlined the project.

Until at least 1914 country houses were run with an army of staff to carry water, heave coal, cook food and tend gardens etc. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century technical innovation in towns was developing, such as gas, electricity, piped water, telephones, heating and sanitation. These public utilities were not available for the isolated country house. The decline of the country house in the 20<sup>th</sup> century ensures that considerable evidence of the innovations they made has survived.

Since 1990 the National Trust have been recording artefacts relating to technology in their houses, this project goes further studying a wide range of houses in the UK. The main categories of domestic technology covered by the project are:

Lighting	Security
Cooking and food storage	Laundry
Water Supply & Sewage	Heating
Communication	Transport

The talk finished with pictures and explanation of examples of the innovations.

The project was discussed at a conference in Oxford in 2010 and the National Trust is due to publish a book later this year. Professor Palmer and Ian West are hosting three 3 day tours entitled "Country House Comfort and Convenience" this year, to Northern Ireland, the Welsh Borders and North East England.

Visits after the conference were to the Carpet Museum, Railway Museum and Drakelow Tunnels. The tunnels were constructed during WW2 and the space was used to produce aircraft engines. Later, during the cold war period, they became a control area designed to hold 350 people.

It was an excellent conference of good general interest but for IA enthusiasts it lacked engineering and manufacturing detail.

We spent the following week in Worcestershire and Shropshire and these are a few interesting finds and pictures.

### **Tenbury Wells\_– The Pump Room and Regal Cinema**

The Pump Room is a building of unusual construction. There had been a spa using the natural brine since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1860 the architect James Cameron was commissioned to design a new Spa Building. He was influenced by greenhouse design of Joseph Paxton and used this principle for the Spa. The glass panels of the greenhouse design were replaced with sheet metal. This was one of the first buildings in the UK to use the prefabricated principle. See the picture.

The Regal Cinema is a beautiful Art Deco building, first opened in 1937 and recently restored and reopened in 2012. It has many original fittings and murals by artist George Legge. There is a history room with original film projectors and memorabilia. Well worth a Google.

### **Severn Valley Railway\_– Highley Engine House and Education Centre**

Adjacent to the station This is a large new hangar housing the Reserve Collection of highly polished locomotives, a Royal Mail coach, SVR films, hands on displays, a restaurant and shop; a good place to visit on a rainy day. See picture.



Tenbury Wells – Pump Room



SVR – Highley Engine House

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### EDITOR`S NOTE:

Thanks to Janet Johnson for the article on SWWRIAC and their travels in Worcestershire & Shropshire and also in particular to Peter Trout for his many superb contributions to this issue. Once again, please consider if you can provide a brief article (or just a photograph) on any subject that you think may be of interest to Members.

We are always in need of material!

**John Coulson**

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### FORTHCOMING 2014 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

29/9/14	BLACKBURN AIRCRAFT	Peter Trout
20/10/14	37 <sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & MEMBERS` EVENING	
17/11/14	OLD INDUSTRIES OF READING – PART 2	David Cliffe
15/12/14	BREWING & PUBS IN READING	John Dearing

All meetings are held on Monday evenings and will start at 7.30pm.

**Travel Guidance:** By bus, the westbound Route 17 bus services stop at the end of St John`s Hill. The nearest eastbound stop for Route 17 is outside the Prudential offices to the north east of the Watlington St bridge over the Kennet. Both stops are about 5 minutes` walk away.

By car, it is easiest to approach by travelling westward along London Road from Cemetery Junction and then turning right into Watlington Street just before the petrol station. Please use the car parking facilities at the front of the site. **Please note that, due to construction works at the back of Watlington House, the front car park gets very full at the moment. Since we are the only group using the building at this time and we will all be leaving together, please do not be concerned about blocking other cars in – it can be sorted out when we leave!!**

Watlington House has a web site with a map: [www.watlingtonhouse.org.uk](http://www.watlingtonhouse.org.uk)

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## VISITS – 2014

These are currently being planned and will be advised when details are available. However, please note the following dates for your diaries:

**Saturday 14 June** – Reading Waterfest, Chestnut Walk, Reading

**11- 14 September** – 2014 Heritage Weekend

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## HOME FRONT LEGACY 1914-1918

### Brian Boulter

The Council for British Archaeology has joined with English Heritage in a project to record all the physical remains of the Great War. It will cover practice trenches dug for training and any camp site remains. In addition it will include surviving buildings which were commandeered as munitions factories or hospitals. President Dan Snow urges us to go out with our mobile phones, tablets or even just paper and pencil in search of wartime remains. I am researching the home front in Maidenhead for a exhibition at the Heritage Centre this autumn, so I will be adding a few houses used as convalescent homes. Details are available at [www.homefrontlegacy.org.uk](http://www.homefrontlegacy.org.uk) The results will be shown on a map of projects and sites, and also copied to the Berkshire Sites & Monuments Register.

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## MAIDENHEAD'S MOTOR INDUSTRY

### Brian Boulter

This is the title of a major exhibition to be held at the Heritage Centre from 17 June to 13 September. It will concentrate on the three locally made cars which will be displayed in sequence, the GWK family saloon, the Burney Streamliner and the Marendaz sports car. There will also be material on the Vanwall racing car. Talks will take place during the exhibition, details on [www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk](http://www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk)

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### 5 – 11 September 2014 – AIA Annual Conference

This is being held based in Chester and offers opportunities for visits to numerous IA sites in the area. For further details, see the AIA website ( <http://www.industrial-archaeology.org> )

### Saturday 22 November 2014 – Celebrating Steam Symposium

This will be held at Devizes Town Hall from 0930 to 1700 hrs and tickets cost £17 (including tea & coffee). Outline programme as follows:

**Richard K. Morris** – *The Archaeology of Railways*

**Dr Rosa Matheson** – *Death, Dynamite & Disaster – A Grisly History of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Railways*

**John Winterburn** – *Jordanese Railways*

**Tim Bryan** – *The Inheritance – GWR between the Wars*

**Colin Maggs** – *History of the Great Western Railway*

**Mark Goover & Mike Stone** – *Signalling – Westinghouse and the Railway Industry in Chippenham*

Tickets are available from the Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes (Telephone: 01380 727369 or [wahs@wiltshireheritage.org.uk](mailto:wahs@wiltshireheritage.org.uk) )

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For general BIAG business, please contact the Secretary: PETER TROUT (Tel: 01491 682002)  
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Submissions to BIAG News are welcome in any format. Please send your contributions with an IA theme such as articles, letters, pictures, jokes, cartoons, cuttings from journals etc. to:

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June 2014

Printing and distribution: Bob Haskins and Bent Weber