

# BERKSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

BIAG News No 27, Summer 2012 Editor: John Coulson

http://www.biag.org.uk

#### **INDUSTRIAL EPHEMERA**

# **Peter Trout**

As the pneumatic drill bites into the masonry and the demolition man's crashing steel ball brings down another floor and wall we are well aware that it is more than bricks and mortar that disappears into a cloud of dust. The little line of artisans' dwellings in Tudor Road, Reading, has recently gone that way. The houses have been long empty and sealed up waiting the cue for developers to move in. Generally a bit of an eyesore!

I have long been used to turning into Tudor Road from Caversham Road thence to Station Hill and Reading Station. On the end wall of the terrace was a huge mural advertising TALBOTS COALS. What a lovely throwback to pre-nationalised railways and a time when coal was king. The railways had thousands of privately owned/sponsored coal waggons moving in and out of the coalfields. Indeed railways were born in the pit villages, especially of County Durham. The great NER then LNER, were sustained by the coal trade. Goole was created as a coal port and South Wales exported coal the whole world over – never mind the domestic hearths of such as Reading. (Hornby produced a local touch, a model AYRES coal waggon). The coal trade was so important that in WWII you could be conscripted into the mines as a Bevin Boy. The wall painting prompted such thoughts even when latterly half covered by a modern notice. Alas, nothing remains - I didn't even take a photograph!

Robin Wallace Sims got quite excited about these wall paintings and signs. They are/were ephemera of a kind although, like Talbots, lasting for many decades. Robin wanted to do something about them in BIAG News but events took a different course. The loss of Talbots has prompted me to resurrect the idea.

I love the one in Prospect St., Caversham which still proclaims hay, straw, fodder etc. In St. Johns St., 50 yds from Watlington House can be discerned, just. 'Ales' etc., on what might have been a small public house or beer 'off-licence'. In Kings Rd by the Oddfellows (?) hall there is another elaborate but vague mural. Fortescues Cycles (Cross St.) stands out clearly. There must be scores, if not hundreds, of such scattered about Berkshire. They may reflect small scale retail/productive economic activity such as a bakery or small works to something much more significant. I liked the camouflaged chimney at Cowley works before it was demolished. (Such peaceful signs contrast with the political ones in Northern Ireland - but even they will go into history.)

Could BIAG members keep their eyes skinned (odd expression!) and cameras poised for such mural/wall signs so that a catalogue or list could be compiled and perhaps put on the website. Such a task, hardly onerous. could be a bit of fun - especially if it also involves children in an I-Spy game. It may not be important but these items are a hint of the past. I am sorry Talbots has gone but even sorrier I didn't take that photo - it's too late now!

# **Editor`s Note**

Below is a typical example I found in Broad St, Wokingham. To follow up on Peter's point, I would suggest we have a small competition. Please would members look to see if they can find this kind of mural and send me copies of any photographs they have taken. We will include a selection of the most interesting in a future issue of BIAG News. Let's see what we can find!



Obviously, it would be easiest if you could send me digital photos in .jpg format but I can also scan in traditional photos if necessary - originals can be returned! Please also advise the date a photograph was taken and its exact location. Thanks.

# **PUBLICATION FOOTNOTES**

# **Peter Trout**

Making use of the "Caversham 100 Years On" project (reported in BIAG News 26) an article was published in Historic Commercial News (Jan/Feb 2012) on motor manufacture in Caversham including. British and Healey Elliott Cars, but with an emphasis on Elliotts.

An article was also submitted to IA News as it was thought BIAG's involvement in "Caversham 100 Years On" was a means of outreach for IA to a wider but local public. However, the article did not fit with IA News housestyle and was therefore rejected. The problem remains of 'only connect ' to inform and to recruit. Ideas welcome.

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# **EDITOR'S NOTE:**

Thanks to Peter Trout for another article in this issue and also to Brian Boulter for a couple of articles and a visit report from SWWRIAC 2012.

I would make my traditional (and continuing) plea to please keep sending me letters, articles, trip reports etc., that can be included in future editions!

John Coulson

#### INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE AT RISK - BUT THE PUBLIC LOVE IT

#### **Brian Boulter**

The AIM Bulletin (Association of Independent Museums) often has items relating to industrial museums and sites. Recently, under the above headline, it reported on the English Heritage (EH) research project into our industrial heritage. In their opinion poll, 86% thought it important to value and appreciate industrial sites. 71% thought they could be converted to other uses, provided their character was preserved. Only 9% considered such sites depressing or eyesores.

However EH recognises that perhaps only 40% are suitable for conversion. Looking at the list of key industrial sites on their "At Risk" register, it is easy to see the problems - most are huge. The towering bulk of Chatterley Whitfield colliery dominates the front cover of the bulletin. It was the first to produce over 1 million tons of coal in a year. Stoke-on-Trent Council tried to run it as a museum but failed to recognise the continuous maintenance required. They decided to close it and sold everything movable. Stanley Docks in Liverpool is the largest brick building in the world (27 million bricks). Sleaford Maltings was the largest of its type in Europe. Ditherington Flax Mill was the first to have an internal iron frame. Soho Foundry was the world's first manufactory of complete steam engines. Then there is Battersea Power station - stripped of its fittings, roofless, and with the fluted chimneys unstable, it may well be beyond salvation.

Elsewhere in the bulletin, there is good and bad news from Sheffield. The Abbeygate Industrial Hamlet, which suffered in a flash flood a few years ago, has received a lottery grant of £900k for development work. But the volunteer-run Traditional Heritage Museum has been closed by the university which owns the building and cannot, it seems, find £500k to repair it.

There are mixed fortunes for transport. The London Bus Museum has moved to new premises at Brooklands, However the Aston Manor Transport Museum has been forced out of the historic tram depot it occupied. Birmingham Council wants to sell the site as an Asian wedding venue and car park.

There is fairly good news from Oxfordshire. Combe Mill on the Blenheim estate has been saved by a lottery grant. Cogges Manor museum has been reopened as a trust but needs to become self-supporting. Finally, the Cumberland Pencil Museum received unexpected free publicity when it was described by the Daily Mail as "one of the dullest tourist attractions". It resulted in extra visitors coming to see how dull it was!

All of which emphasises that industrial museums are more at risk than ever during the current economic problems. Try to visit as many as possible this summer; it's the best way to help their survival.

#### **HAPPY COINCIDENCES**

#### **Brian Boulter**

Maidenhead Heritage Centre has recently been given a collection of material relating to Challow Court Prep. School, which functioned from 1945 to 1975. It occupied what appeared from photographs to have been a large Victorian house on the outskirts of Maidenhead. Out of interest, I checked who had owned it previously and found the name Charles Nelme Nalder. The name seemed familiar and then I remembered – Nalder and Nalder ran their iron works at Challow, near Wantage!

Fortunately Tony Hadland came to talk to BIAG on 20<sup>th</sup> February about industries in the Vale of the White Horse and I was able to ask him about the possible connection. He has since given me details of the family and I was able to find an obituary in the Maidenhead Advertiser. Charles Nelme Nalder was the son of one of the two brothers who did not go into the family business. Born in 1861, he went to school in Oxford and then completed his education in France and Germany. He qualified as a solicitor aged 21 and entered the practice of Denton, Hall and Burgen in Grays Inn. He built his Maidenhead house in 1904 and named it after his boyhood home.

Tony Hadland then added another coincidence. The firm of Denton, Hall etc. still operates and Tony had dealings with them when he was working in the construction industry. He also added a sad postscript to his talk; the Wantage Engineering Co. has now closed down.

And there is more! A colleague at the Heritage Centre was the architect who built the house for the sisters who had run the school until it closed. It was on the site of the playing field and incorporated many of the fine doors from Challow Court. He himself acquired a cast iron fireplace from the demolished school. He is sure it was made by Nalder's but cannot check as it is built into his home. And his daughter has a Nalder hand plough she bought from a local junk shop.

All in all, a fascinating story.

# Queen's Diamond Jubilee Exhibition (Sunday 24 June), cost £6.00 each

There will be a private viewing of a special Queen's Diamond Jubilee exhibition at Wallingford Museum, starting at 10.00hrs, followed by walk/talk with Stephen Capel-Davies, (*Malting and Brewing around Wallingford*). Lunch will be available locally and a ride on the Cholsey-Wallingford Railway should be possible in the afternoon.

# **VISIT NOTES**

# Saturday 21 April – South Wales & West of England Regional IA Conference (SWWRIAC 2012)

#### **Brian Boulter**

Several BIAG members attended this conference at Cheddar organised by our colleagues in the South West & Wales region. The speakers' topics demonstrated the breadth of interests which make up the subject today, - recording, research and restoration.

We began with a detective story. How do you prove the legend that the cylindrical object used as an outlet strainer for Sutton Poyntz reservoir really was a funnel from S.S. Great Eastern. The clues were assembled in a convincing manner.

We heard about two men I had never come across before. Robert Mushet was a metallurgist working in the Forest of Dean. His analytical work was as large a contribution to steel making as Bessemer's. Louis Keltone was an engineer working for Somerset C.C. and involved with drainage of the Somerset Levels. He had also trained as a solicitor and it was due to his persuasive negotiating skills that Weston Zoyland pumping station and its collection of engines exists.

In a talk on the extractive industries of Dartmoor, the speaker stressed that the economics of market demand and price were the main reasons why some ventures succeeded but other failed.

I then joined a group which drove up Cheddar Gorge to the windswept Mendips at Charterhouse. There the significance of various humps, hollows and masonry was explained. The Romans, it seems, had learned about lead mining from the natives. Galena ore had been collected by neolithic man.

So ended a splendid day - their next conference will be hosted by Bristol I.A.S.

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# South East Regional IA Conference (SERIAC 2012) at Newbury

#### **Dennis Johnson**

I would like to say thank you to all those who helped to run a successful Industrial Archaeology Conference at Newbury on 28 April. All who volunteered ensured things ran smoothly at the enrolment. I would like to thank especially those who valiantly manned the car park in the rain and guided delegates to the best parking places. A special mention must be made for Ben Wiener's help with the digital display equipment considering the difficulty experienced with the school's projector. Ben played a vital part in ensuring that each speaker's presentation was checked before hand and ran smoothly.

Finally many thanks to Graham Smith for all the hard work he put in behind the scenes organising the venue and carrying out all the administrative work in preparing the conference booking leaflet and the conference booklet giving summaries of the talks. He was also busy dashing around at the school on the day of the conference ensuring that displays were in the right places, and smoothing the flow of the catering. Thank you, Graham.

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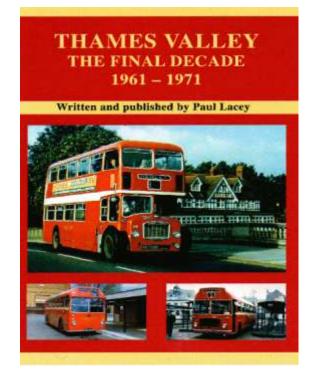
# **RECENT PUBLICATIONS**

This final instalment of the 4-volume 800-page history of the Thames Valley Traction Co. Ltd. brings the story to its conclusion on the last day of 1971.

All route developments and changes to the fleet are fully detailed, along with special appendices for the service vehicle fleet, garages and out-stations, a route map, garage allocations and working arrangements. Profusely illustrated with 548 monochrome half-tone illustrations and a full-colour section of 45 photos, this provides a very comprehensive history of this interesting decade, including the numerous second-hand vehicles acquired during those years. Demand will be high, so order now from:

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A History of the Thames Valley Traction Co. Ltd., 1931-1945	(£25) £12.50
A History of the Thames Valley Traction Co. Ltd., 1946-1960	(£25) £12.50
The Newbury & District Motor Services Story (new in 2011)	(£25) £12.50
50 Years of South Midland 1921-1970 (by David Flitton)	(£11) £5.50
Thackray's Way – A Family in Road Transport	(£10) £5.00

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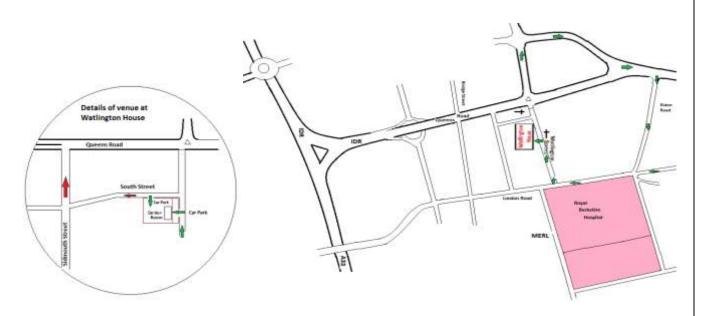
# FORTHCOMING SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2012 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

17/9/12	THE CLIFTON ROCKS RAILWAY (NB: see visit on 22/9/12)	Peter Davey
15/10/12	60 YEARS OF AWE	Kate Pyne
19/11/12	AGM AND MEMBERS` EVENING	
17/12/12	THE HISTORY OF THE SEWING MACHINE	Martin Gregory

Meetings will now be held upstairs in Watlington House, 44 Watlington St, Reading RG1 4RG in a meeting room on the first floor. All meetings are held on Monday evenings and will start at 7.30pm.

<u>Travel Guidance:</u> 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. Car parking facilities are available at the rear of the site via the entrance in South Street.



Watlington House has a web site with a map: www.watlingtonhouse.org.uk

#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

# Queen's Diamond Jubilee Exhibition (Sunday 24 June)

There will be a private viewing of a special Queen's Diamond Jubilee exhibition at Wallingford Museum, starting at 10.00hrs, followed by walk/talk with Stephen Capel-Davies, (*Malting and Brewing around Wallingford*). Lunch will be available locally and a ride on the Cholsey-Wallingford Railway should be possible in the afternoon.

# Fawley Railway & Museum (Sunday 12 August)

Visit to the Steam Railway and Museum of Sir Robert McAlpine at Fawley (limited to 20).

# Clifton Rocks Railway (Saturday 22 September)

Following the talk on Monday 17 September, there will be a visit to the Clifton Rocks Railway, Bristol, starting at 1400 hrs.

Please contact Ron Neal (Tel: 01635 34342, email: <a href="mailto:ronaldgneal@gmail.com">ronaldgneal@gmail.com</a>) if you want to book for any of the visits or if you have any queries.

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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