



BERKSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

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Editor: John Coulson

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

PLENTY LIMITED -A Newburian Treasure.

In some respects Newbury of the past differs from Newbury of the present. One interesting difference is that at one time the manufacturing took place behind street frontages. The example I have in mind is Plenty and Co., whose heavy engineering works was at one time located between Cheap St. and Bartholomew St. This company is closely associated with Newbury's history and its story is worthy of examination and consideration.

In 1790 William Plenty moved to Newbury, from Southampton, and established himself as a manufacturer of farming equipment. Indeed, in 1806 he invented an improved iron plough which gained national recognition. However, Mr Plenty proved himself to be an inventive genius in other ways too, for ten years later he invented an 'unsinkable' lifeboat which he launched at West Mills. The boat, called 'The Experiment' was taken to London, where he gained several orders. The success of this invention can be gauged from the fact that in 1824 eleven out of 14 of the lifeboats in use around Great Britain were made by the Newbury Company.

William Plenty died in 1832 and he was succeeded by his two sons, James and Edward Pellow. During the second half of the 19th Century the company continued to demonstrate its ability to innovate and respond to change, as it began to manufacture static steam engines which were used to drive machinery in factories, timber sawmills and on farms. Indeed, Plentys went on to produce marine steam engines and in 1885 it provided the machinery for the Nordenfeldt submarine.

By the beginning of the 20th Century the company was selling products all over southern England.

In 1903 Edward Pellow Plenty, the third person to bear that name, purchased a site beside the railway in King's Road, where boilers which served the Company's steam engines were made. In addition the Company made an agreement with the Great Western Railway Company for the provision of a railway siding into the King's Road site. This enabled Plenty's to load steam boilers and engines directly from the boiler shop in King's Road

Edward Pellow was also fascinated by the development of the motor car and so in 1908 he developed the Newbury Vari, which possessed solid tyres and cost £225. Only a few were made and sold and consequently the Company concentrated on its more successful marine engine business.

During the period 1914-1945 ten of those years were taken up with global conflict which greatly affected Plentys. During the 1st. World War (1914-1918) women were employed at the Kings Road factory, to help with the making of 18 pounder shells and during the 2nd World War (1939-1946) it is believed that the company manufactured submarine engines. There is a theory that the February 1943 bombing raid on Newbury was targeting Plenty's factory in Cheap Street.

Post war, in 1949 the company ceased to be family run, when Edward Pellow Plenty died. It branched out into the manufacture of filters, mixers and pumps, which were mainly used by the oil and gas industries.

In 1965 Plentys moved from its site in Cheap St., where the Kennet Centre now stands, to Hambridge Road. A change in ownership came in 2001, when the company was acquired by SPX Corporation and its name was changed to 'SPX Technology, Newbury'.

So for more than 220 years Plenty Ltd. has had a proud place in Newbury's history and has been a company that has brought renown to West Berkshire.

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Old Trade Murals

Peter Pribik

Following your plea for members to look out for old painted wall signs in BIAG News 27 & 28, by coincidence a letter appeared in the November edition of Old Glory magazine mentioning the Talbots sign in Tudor Road together with a photograph. It goes on to say that there is a society (History of Advertising Trust) which has a website www.hat.org.uk including a gallery which contains 800 such signs (look under Ghostsigns).

Going through the tiny village of Woolhampton on the A4 the other day, I noticed a total of no less than four such signs – Garage, Teas with Hovis, Newsagents and Baker and Confectioner.

EDITOR`S NOTE:

Thanks to Graham Smith for suggesting reproducing the articles on Plentys of Newbury and “Industry in the Countryside” in this issue and also to Peter Pribik for the follow-up article on Old Trade Murals above. It`s worth noting that the History of Advertising Trust website has a facility to allow online viewers to submit photographs of any interesting murals together with any supporting information!

I would also 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

INDUSTRY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE – WHY NOT?

Dick Greenaway (Chairman WBCS)

Industry in the countryside? Surely not!

There are many people who think that industry, ie making things, is ‘out of keeping with the countryside’. That somehow the countryside should be kept pretty for the tourists and that industry is not ‘traditional’. However, a very slight acquaintance with countryside history will show you that the last couple of generations have been an anomaly and that industry played a very great part in the life of the countryside and not all of it was pretty!

Consider brick making. All over West Berkshire the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey maps show small scale brick and tile works where the mixed geology of clays, sands and chalks provided the materials. The charming dimples in fields that add interest to the landscape would have been muddy swamps until the Second World War closed the kilns down. What about the blacksmiths and wheelwrights? If you lived in a village the blacksmith’s hammering would have woken you before six am and gone on all day and there were often more than one blacksmith in a village. The wheelwright’s yard would have been littered with broken down carts and bits of wagons. But both of them provided employment and incomes for many families who, in turn supported the local shops and sent their children to the local school.

There were, certainly, less intrusive businesses as a look at the contemporary Kelly’s Directories will show. These were the ‘Yellow Pages’ of their day and list the business in each town and village. It is remarkable how many a small village could have. Take a small village like Hampstead Norreys in the Pang Valley. In 1847 it had three boot makers, a harness maker, a clock maker, three blacksmiths, a wheelwright and a hurdle maker.

What about ‘traffic on country lanes’? Have you seen the latest generation of tractors and trailers? They are huge. How is an articulated lorry different?

Now, I am not saying that tourism is not important. It certainly is, but it is seasonal and provides a limited number of full time jobs. Tourism should surely be taking its place alongside farming and rural industry. By the careful siting of businesses and the sensitive restoration and use of redundant farm buildings we may be able to stop our villages drifting into being simply dormitories and we may also be able to keep the countryside not only beautiful and interesting but **alive!**



Brick making. - This would have been a muddy swamp



A wheelwright's yard about 1900 – Perhaps this was considered an eyesore at the time?

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FORTHCOMING JANUARY – MAY 2013 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

21/1/13	SNIPPETS OF INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY	Peter Pribik
18/2/13	BRICKS	John Harrison
18/3/13	TIDAL MILLS	David Plunkett
15/4/13	FILM EVENING	
20/5/13	LONDON AERODROME	Peter Donovan

The following dates have been identified for the Autumn 2013 meetings –please reserve them in your diaries now! – 30 September, 21 October, 18 November & 16 December. All meetings are held on Monday evenings and will start at 7.30pm.

Please note that the meetings will be held in the basement refectory for the time being.
Travel Guidance: Watlington House has a web site with a map: www.watlingtonhouse.org.uk

South East Regional IA Conference (SERIAC 2013) at Dartford, Kent

The next SERIAC conference will take place at Dartford Grammar School West Hill, Dartford, Kent, DA1 2HW. on Saturday April 27th and will be hosted by Kent Archaeological Society (www.kentarchaeology.org.uk). The outline programme has now been announced and is as follows:

Arrival and Registration.

Opening proceedings. President K.A.S. Ian Coulson.

Gunpowder industry of Kent. Professor Alan Crocker .

Ship Building in Kent. Richard Holdsworth, Preservation & Education Director, The Historic Dockyard, Chatham.

Historic Aircraft restoration. Chairman of Medway Aircraft Preservation Society Limited,

Early years of J & E Hall of Dartford. Terry Young. Director/General Manager J & E Hall Technology Centre.

Cement Industry in Kent. Jim Preston.

Kentish motor cycle manufacturers. Nick Kelly.

Closing remarks by the Chairman.

Cost for pre-booked delegates will be £12. However the cost on the day will be £15. A buffet lunch may be prebooked at a cost of £7.50p

Further information and Booking Form is available from Mike Clinch 01322526425, e-mail mike@mikeclinch.co.uk (or see Dennis Johnson or Graham Smith at BIAG).

South West and Wales Regional IA Conference (SWWRIAC) at Bristol

The next SSWWRIAC conference is being organised by the Bristol Industrial Archaeology Society and it will be held in the large conference room at The Fry's Club on Saturday April 20th 2013.

Contact Graham Vincent at 52 Langdon Rd, Bath, BA2 1IS; Phone 0122 5338459, e-mail grathetrain@gmail.com for details and to book:

POSSIBLE VISITS

The following possible visits have been suggested for 2013 – watch this space for further details!

Forest of Dean

Tidal Mill at Eling and other AI sites in the area

Claverton Pumping Station and Museum of Bath at Work (or Devizes)

London

Please contact Ron Neal (Tel: 01635 34342, email: ronaldgneal@gmail.com) if you want to book for any of the visits or if you have any queries.

Please also note the date for **Reading Water Fest** on Saturday 15 June at Chestnut Walk, Reading

For general BIAG business, please contact the Secretary: PETER TROUT (Tel: 01491 682002)
7 WEST CHILTERN, WOODCOTE, READING, RG8 0SG

Annual subscriptions for BIAG for 2013 are now due. Please send cheques for £20 made payable to "BIAG" to the Treasurer, PETER PRIBIK, 6 HAREFIELD CLOSE, WINNERSH, WOKINGHAM, RG41 5NP.

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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