



# BERKSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

**BIAG News No 36, Winter 2015**

**Editor: John Coulson**

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

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## THE KILNS AT CHINNOR CEMENT & LIME LTD

**Edwin A.R. Trout**

Messrs W.E. and N.M. Benton established their business in 1908 when they erected one open and five beehive kilns for the production of hydraulic lime. Later, after the Great War, they expanded into cement making. The construction of four Batchelor chamber kilns started in 1919, allowing cement production to commence in 1921. A further three kilns were added soon after. In 1928, however, the static kilns used for cement production were replaced with a rotary kiln supplied by Edgar Allen of Sheffield – the first of four rotary kilns to be installed over the years – and in 1938 the manufacture of hydraulic lime switched to six modern shaft kilns.

As the new rotary kilns were added in turn, and the site evolved, the redundant static kilns were eventually cleared. When the works closed down in 1999 the one remaining early beehive lime kiln – No.3 – was retained and listed as grade II. A planning brief prepared in 2004 for the redevelopment of Chinnor Works as a housing estate required that it “must include arrangements for the enhancement of the listed beehive kiln and its setting within a public space which provides its approach to view and access the structure.” With the redevelopment largely complete, a planning application for renovation of the “old kiln” was approved on 15 September 2014, providing for installation of grilles, railings and a gate around it, with some hard standing. These pictures indicate its state of preservation on 3 April 2015.





Cemex UK, the final industrial owner of the site, continues to make use of the kiln in presenting the history of cement and lime manufacturing to the general public.

# FOREST OF DEAN RAILWAY AND THE LYDNEY CANAL

Dennis Johnson

On a fine day on 8 August 2015 Janet and I joined a group of about a dozen other members of BIAG on a visit to the Forest of Dean Railway. We started with a conducted tour of the workshops and reserve collection.



I was particularly interested in an old coach which reminded me of a 2 coach train on which I travelled to school from Ashburton to Totnes on the Dart Valley Railway; a push and pull with a tank engine at one end.



After the tour we had a trip on the railway, travelling first to Lydney Junction before retracing our route and going north.

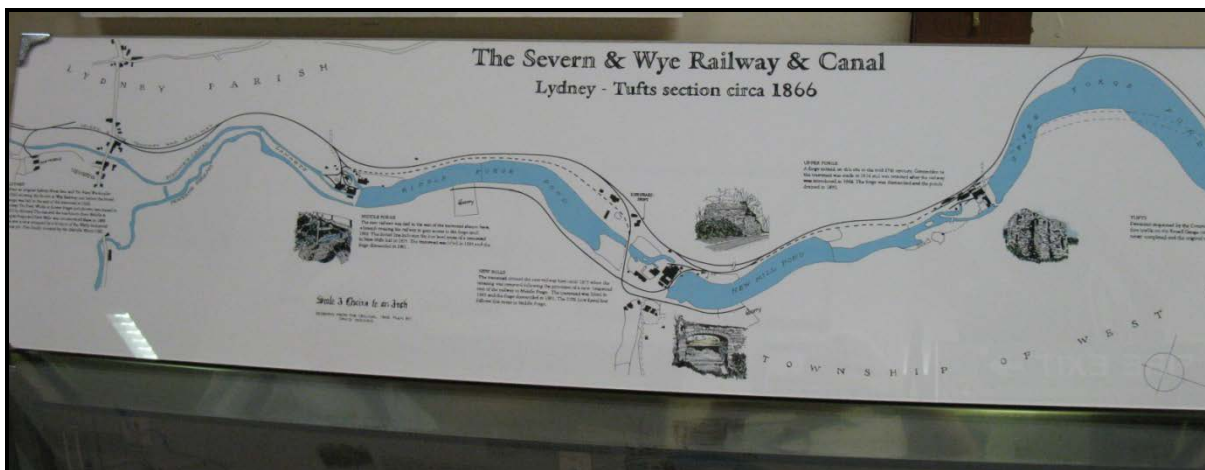


At Norchard we left the group in order to investigate the canal which was used in the valley before the railway was built; we had explored the Forest of Dean Railway a few years earlier, I wanted to explore the Lydney Canal, also known as Pidcock's Canal after the person who built it, starting in 1779.

### Pidcock's Canal

Pidcock's Canal was a canal which connected ironworks at Upper Forge and Lower Forge, and also ran to an inlet from the River Severn called Lydney Pill. It was constructed from 1778 onwards, and there were three locks below Middle Forge. Following the construction of the Lydney Canal in 1813, the canal connected to that, rather than Lydney Pill, and it was disused after 1840, by which time a railway had been built up the valley of The Lyd. The railway is now preserved as the Dean Forest Railway, and most of the canal, called The Cut, still exists below Middle Forge.

An illustration in the Forest of Dean Museum shows the canal going from the Middle Forge pond on the left.



The area around the River Lyd, near what is now Norchard rail yard, had two iron works which were leased to the Pidcock's; they managed the forges until 1813. They also ran the Lower Forge and built the Pidcock's Canal to transport material along the valley of the River Lyd. In 1813 the Lydney canal was opened to connect the old canal to a harbour at the Severn. The life of the canal was short, it was disused after 1840, by which time a railway had been built up the valley of the Lyd.

The canal ran for 1½ miles and had three locks. A horse drawn tramway was laid between Lydney and the Severn, to move the coal and iron to the wharves after it was brought down from the pits and forges on the Pidcock's Canal. The wharves and canal were connected to the Severn by a lock, see illustration below. During the hey-day of the docks around 300,000 tons of coal was being exported annually in over 2000 vessels. The final export of coal from the harbour was in 1960.

The docks have recently been restored to create a marina and harbour area for seagoing yachts and motor boats.



The canal through Lydney



Lock entrance from River Severn

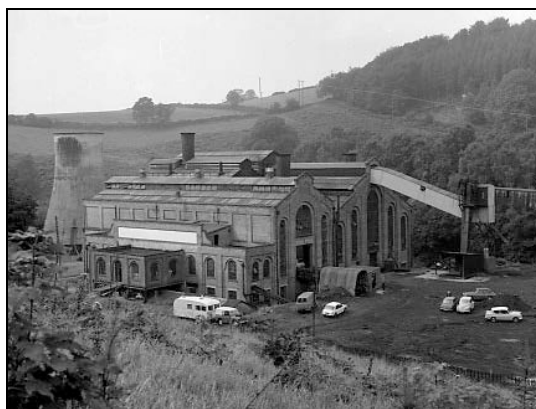
### Post Script

In the early 1920s electric power was required in the Forest of Dean. The Norchard Colliery had a good supply of coal and so an electricity power plant was built adjacent to the mine. The power station also supplied the Stroud Valley by means of an underwater cable under the River Severn. The buildings at the bottom of the picture below were the Lydney Power station of the West Gloucester Power Company. The cooling tower can also be seen. Waste ash and clinker were carried by overhead gantries to old mines in the hills to the north west of the Lyd valley.

The site is now the car park of the Dean Forest Railway at Norchard.



Lydney Power Station



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## VICTORIAN SOCIETY CAMPAIGN TO SAVE ST PATRICK'S HALL

### Bob Haskins

The following is a quotation from a Victorian Society email:

#### **“Reading University should abandon plans to demolish hall used in WWI**

We are urging the University of Reading to abandon plans to demolish a hall of residence which housed Royal Air Corps cadets during the First World War. The Society believes that the 1913 building should instead be incorporated into redevelopment plans. Its architects, C. Smith & Son, also designed the Grade II listed Wantage Hall and much of the University's London Road Campus including the listed Great Hall. Smith Senior was twice mayor and his son was the first

president of the Reading Society of Architects. [Read more here](#). We appeared on [BBC 1 South news](#) and BBC Berkshire to argue for the building's retention. The former President of St Patrick's and the former President of Reading Students' Union have now started a petition against the plans which [can be signed here](#). You can [comment on the University's plans here](#)."

#### **Editor's Note:**

The proposed demolition of St Patrick's Hall has also featured in the "Nooks and Corners" column of a recent edition of Private Eye (No 1406 dated 27/11/15). This points out that next month is the centenary of the founding of the No 1 School of Military Aeronautics in Reading (close to the airfield at Coley Park) and this was one of the buildings used. One of the pilots who resided there while training was Capt W.E. Johns - the creator of Biggles. The new "Pevsner" for Berkshire describes the building as "Neo-Early Georgian, rather military looking". Interestingly, the Georgian style became almost the official style of the RAF and was the architectural background to Spitfires & Hurricanes in WW II.

Also, it comments that Reading was a residential university from the beginning and this was an early example of a hall of residence designed around single study bedrooms and common rooms. The University has responded saying "it is not a museum piece" and that "what was appropriate for air cadets in the First World War is inappropriate for students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century who rightly expect high standards". The column continues "*Such bluster could be used to justify the demolition of any old building but young men (and women) are roughly the same size and shape as they were in 1915 and the university has failed to explain why St Patrick's Hall cannot be modernized internally. It is, as Second Lieut James Bigglesworth, DSO, MC might say "a bad business".*"

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## **INTERESTING WEBSITES**

### **Jim Greenaway**

Jim has come across the following websites that may be of interest to members:

[www.railmaponline.com](http://www.railmaponline.com) shows every line in the UK both old and new.

[www.gracesguide.co.uk](http://www.gracesguide.co.uk) – Graces Guide to British Industrial History (112550 pages).

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## **FORTHCOMING 2016 MEETINGS PROGRAMME**

18/1/16	<b>MILLING TECHNOLOGY IN THE CEMENT INDUSTRY (1<sup>st</sup> Prize Winner Mills Archive Research 2014)</b>	Edwin Trout
15/2/16	<b>FOX TALBOT – Commercial Photography &amp; Reading</b>	Martin Andrews
21/3/16	<b>BRICKWORKS IN WARFIELD &amp; DISTRICT</b>	Paul Lacey
18/4/16	<b>VICTORIAN &amp; EDWARDIAN INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS IN OXFORD</b> (to be followed later by a tour)	Liz Woolley
16/5/16	<b>BASINGSTOKE &amp; THE WEY NAVIGATION</b>	Paul Joyce
26/9/16	<b>AIRSHIPS</b>	Peter Trout
17/10/16	<b>AGM &amp; MEMBERS' EVENING</b>	
21/11/16	<b>AIRFIELD ARCHAEOLOGY</b>	
19/12/16	<b>FILM EVENING &amp; SOCIAL</b>	

All meetings are held on Monday evenings at Watlington House 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.

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

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## **EDITOR`S NOTE:**

As you all know I'm always looking for additional content and new fresh ideas for the newsletter and will of course welcome any feedback. So please keep these articles and comments coming in so that we can enjoy another issue early in 2016.

Finally, thanks to Edwin Trout for his article on the Chinnor Cement Kilns and to Dennis Johnson for the article on the Forest of Dean Railway and the Lydney Canal which is an interesting follow-up to an enjoyable BIAG trip in the summer..

**John Coulson** ( [jcoulson@theiet.org](mailto:jcoulson@theiet.org) )

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## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

### **SERIAC 2016 (23 April 2016)**

To be hosted by Surrey Industrial History Group at Holy Cross Preparatory School, George Rd, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7NU.

### **SWWRIAC 2016 (16 April 2016)**

To be held at Dursley (Glos).

### **AIA CONFERENCE – (9-14 Sept 2016)**

To be held in Telford

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## **POSSIBLE SUMMER VISITS**

The following ideas have been suggested:

Oxford (BMW)

Oxford – Victorian & Edwardian Industrial Buildings (Follow-up to 16/4/16 talk)

Swanage (Railway & clay museum)

Lacock Abbey

Local field walk

RAF Woodcote project – The country in the locality is scattered with old airfields (ref evening talk on 21/11/16).

Possible project to look at and record remains of RAF Woodcote,

Any further suggestions welcome!

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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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or e-mail [jcoulson@theiet.org](mailto:jcoulson@theiet.org)

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