Exploring the Industrial River Pang
Sheila Viner

Editor’s Note: Sheila kindly gave me a copy of the notes for her talk to BIAG in January. I have edited these (I hope correctly!) to create this article.

The map shows the area of the course of the River Pang

The great triangle of land between the lower Kennet and the Thames at Streatley belongs by right to the River Pang. The heart of the district drains solely to the diminutive stream which in wet years sweetens the vast hollows near Ilsley and in dry summers may be almost waterless as far as Bucklebury. The Pang curves in a deep loop from its source in the Berkshire Downs at Compton, through the villages of Hampstead Norreys, Frilsham, Bucklebury, Stanford Dingley, Bradfield and Tidmarsh, so joining the Thames at Pangbourne. It starts as an intermittent chalkland winterbourne (a stream, typically on chalk or limestone, which flows only after wet weather) and in its middle and lower reaches, reinforced by fresh springs, it becomes a clear gravel trout stream flowing through a lush valley. Sheep would have appreciated it because, in fact, East Ilsley was second only to London in hosting sheep fairs and gained great prosperity from them until the arrival of the railways. The remains of seven watermills and of a water powered foundry testify to the river’s vanished utilitarian past.
There are also a few windmills in the area, but they started later than watermills and didn't last long. A colleague at the Mills Archive and Mills Research Group, (Guy Blythman), has produced a little book detailing all he could find out about Berkshire's windmills.

So, what do we find in the 21st century along the course of the Pang which starts from artesian springs which also feed the renowned Blue Pools that once supported a watercress industry?

Starting from its source, the first industrial building of interest is a steam driven foundry at Compton known as the White Wall Iron Works. However, its use of water taken from the Pang hasn't yet been substantiated but some interesting facts about it have come to light. For the full article have a look at the website www.shepherdhuts.co.uk- this foundry appears to have been started by William Baker who died in 1939 at the age of 89.

The Works grew to substantial proportions employing around 90 people at its peak and the foundry measured around 100 feet by 30 feet with an overhead one-ton crane traversing the length of the building. An oven for drying cores at one end of the building and a cupola was situated on one side supplied with iron and coke hauled by a small truck on wheels in turn hauled by a windlass. The main workshop, about 100 ft. long by 60 ft. wide had a large machine shop with lathes, drilling machines and other metal working equipment.

There was also a wood working department and, in both shops line shafting conveyed power generated initially from a steam engine, powered by off-cuts of wood, presumably supplied from the mill which cut local timber into planks which were stacked for drying and used in the woodwork shop. Steam power was superseded by a Ruston and Hornsby gas engine and then a 90hp Blackstone oil engine.

There were no fewer than five blacksmith forges for shoeing horses, and making tyres for wheels, fitments and iron work for other products. There was a corn mill for grinding farmers cereal and it seems that there was at least one threshing team attached to the works consisting of a traction engine, thrashing machine, bale, living van and a water cart available for contract hire. A bore-hole sinking service was also offered for local farmers. In WW2, the works completed War Office contracts for road blocks, sectional floating piers for commandos, anti-aircraft gun mounts, and tar sprayers for making roads in the desert.

Surviving catalogues from 1894 and the 1920s show a diverse range of products including shepherd huts and well heads, water pumps, water and liquid manure carts, sanitary tumbler carts for butchers or farmers, street watering carts and vans, street sweeping machines, builders and contractors carts. Horse drawn agricultural equipment was manufactured from ploughs to harrows. An armoured hose was produced to complement its range and even an early pedal cycle called the Compton cycle, but alas, mechanisation of transport and industry left White Walls floundering and it was sold to the British Hoist and Crane Company in 1953. In 1970 the company changed name to Jones Cranes but 13 years later the site was closed.

Hampstead Norreys once had a watermill but dates are sketchy and so far, no site or details have been discovered, more work needed!

Some information on the milling family there is available thanks to Cicely Dewe who was introduced to me by Hampshire's Longbridge miller, the late Basil Hunt. She was born into the Dewe family with parents from two milling dynasties - her father was a Dewe and her mother was a Porter. Porters were listed at Sheepbridge Mill,
Swallowfield. While the Dewes were associated with quite a few watermills and their varying industries in Berkshire and Hampshire (mainly on the Thames, Loddon and Kennet).

The online history for the Hampstead Norreys area shows Dewes playing a part here in the 17th century up to at least 1816. Cicely’s grandfather and his brother were gentlemen farmers and millers.

Yattendon is now some distance from the present-day River Pang but a watermill is mentioned in the Domesday Book. This no longer exists and therefore, along with Hampstead Norreys, was not recorded by Ken Major in his 1967 Berkshire Gazetteer of Watermills because he usually only listed existing buildings. However, brick making was carried out there (together with Frilsham), thanks due in no small measure to Alfred Waterhouse commissioning locally made bricks for his new design of Yattendon Manor.

The railings and gate around Frilsham church were manufactured in a foundry in the next village at Bucklebury. Frilsham mill is the first Ken Major listing on the Pang stating that the wheel was in existence but the gear had been removed. The building is now preserved having been made into residential apartments.

The next mill is the first of two water driven barn mills, located either side of Bucklebury village, which were presumably used for barley milling, chaff cutting, oat cake crushing and so on for animal feeds.

River Barn at Marlston had a leat created from the Pang to drive its mill wheel. The Gazetteer records one pair of stones dated 1884; mill in fairish condition. The wheel also drove a chaff cutter, saw etc. which were built by Bucklebury foundry. In 1922 the vast Bucklebury estate was sold off in parcels and the sales brochure gives details for River Barn.

Ken Major’s survey beautifully recorded the barn and machinery in detail.
Robin Wallace Sims and Cyril McCombe, with other BIAG members, surveyed the same barn in 1986 when it had suffered fire damage. The photos are the only recording of the survey and sadly there is no written record.

The next barn is better known, namely Black Barn. This was surveyed by BIAG in 1986 (see Dennis Johnson photo) but, since then it has also suffered fire damage. The wheel still exists in a poor condition. A restoration programme was started in 2009 but failed to secure HLF funding. It is a tithe barn with a mill barn built as an extension and Ken Major recorded one pair of stones and a wheel.

Berkshire Record Office has a wealth of data on the Bucklebury foundry – not only the 1922 sales catalogue but also the Hedges ledger for the forge dated 1738. The Hedges family were there in the 1600s and all kinds of repairs to domestic wares and agricultural machinery are listed. The water wheel drove the fans etc that blew the furnace, forge bellows and other machinery. The foundry worked for over 400 years making tools, railings, grave markers, machine parts and stiles.

Ken Major carried out a survey of the foundry in 1962 including a drawing of the cupola furnace. This was removed later and sent to the Ironbridge Museum, BIAG members photographed its removal. The foundry patterns were deposited at MERL.

At Stanford Dingley, the Pang still flows under and through what is now Mill Cottage but, as you can see it’s now somebody’s home. In 1960 a wheel was recorded in situ.
A tannery here in the 19th century also depended upon the Pang and the oak bark used in the tanning process was probably crushed in the mill. From 1841 to 1854 the tan yard was run by Sparky Evans who presented a pair of benches for the village green outside the Bull, the fancy iron frames in the form of branches were probably wrought or cast at Bucklebury.

Further east the Pang meets Kimberhead Springs which are also known as the Blue Pool. This is a collection of large ponds and the river is said never to run dry below this point. The ponds were extended to create watercress beds but water pollution has put paid to that venture.

Bradfield is recorded in Domesday as having three mills worth 53 shillings but this probably means there were three sets of stones in the mill which is now part of the Bradfield College complex. The mill was rebuilt in the 19th century when it was enlarged from a corn mill to incorporate water pumping from the nearby St Andrews Well for the whole village and a laundry. Thomas Stevens, rector, squire and would-be entrepreneur, tried his hand utilising the water supply (said to have been “clean and pure with plenty of prickle”) for soda water manufacturing in the 1870s but proved unsuccessful. The rector's next commercial venture was more ambitious but even less successful. In 1874; he formed a new company – the British and Foreign Frozen Meat Company using the Pang to power a refrigerating plant. His son wrote that “there's the most tremendous draught, and the fan goes around 5,000 times a minute making a row like a threshing machine”. However, after a dismal and troublesome six months the rector announced he wouldn't be doing any more tinkering. The mill buildings are now conserved and used as storage. Ken Major noted the wheel was still there. Brendan Barrow records it as tidily kept.

The Bourne stream enters the Pang before it reaches the mill at Tidmarsh on the Bere Leys estate. The photograph is by the renowned postcard photographer, Sid Simmons; thankfully dated (25 June 1939) and correctly named.
There is a connection here to the Dewe millers from Hampstead Norreys. A Payze or two joined the Dewe dynasty and Percy Owen Payze (P.O.P) became master miller and owner of Tidmarsh Mill. He was Cicely Dewe’s grandfather.

Tidmarsh Mill’s 20th century social history provides some interesting reading as it was a haunt of the Bloomsbury set and was painted by Dora Carrington. However, the mill buff should note it only has its wheel left - and that’s being looked after indoors, in a glass case!

Finally, we come to Pangbourne. This delightful old postcard view shows us the Pangbourne watermill approached from Tidmarsh clearly showing us the Pang flowing beneath the mill through the wheel arch, on the left is the main road which links the A4 at Theale to Pangbourne.

Ken Major sadly noted that the mill had been replaced by a water works (in 1929) although the mill house is still there and is quite secluded behind the village shops. Pangbourne Mill was a trading mill with two waterwheels and four pairs of millstones. The miller did not buy grain from the local farms but became a member of Reading Corn Exchange and of the London Corn Exchange and bought his grain there. He still had to find his outlets among the bakeries in the towns and villages near the mill. It was tenanted in 1871 by Robert Stone and in 1888 he added Tidmarsh Mill to the business. Percy Stone (his third son) formed a limited company in 1925 and, when Pangbourne Mill closed in 1929 the business moved to a steam mill by the railway when Tidmarsh mill closed (in 1937). Percy Stone Ltd still exists as corn merchants and seedsmen. Aged 75 in 1986 he was still working daily at his shop in the High Street.

Robert Stone’s fascinating diaries tell us what an exhausting life he led. Ken and Helen Major transcribed them for the International Molinological Society. The four small diaries present us with a great deal of detail covering his life
learning his milling trade at High Wycombe, assuming the responsibility of a large, busy watermill at an early age and the ways, means and reasons for developing the corn milling business in the 1800s. Following his marriage in 1873, the diary entries are quite full for a brief period but then become intermittent and finally are only a series or records of events. By the time his family had grown to three (there were to be ten children eventually) he gave up keeping a diary. The only borrowable copy I have found of this book is in Pangbourne Library.

Much of the research comes from books on the Pang valley written by Dick Greenaway and Dorcas Ward to whom I am deeply indebted. There is much more for me to do and of course if there is anything you can add please tell me.

Books consulted:

In the Valley of the Pang, ed. Dick Greenaway & Dorcas Ward pub. 2002 by The Friends of the Pang and Kennet Valleys.

Around the Valley of the Pang by Dick Greenaway pub. 2007 by The Friends of the Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Valleys.


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Berkshire by Ian Yarrow pub. 1952 Robert Hale Ltd in the County Books Series.

Companion into Berkshire by R.P. Beckinsale D.Phil. pub. 1951 Methuen & Co.

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LAMBOURN GASWORKS

David Cliffe

In my role as Chairman of the Berkshire Local History Association, I have received a request for information about the gasworks at Lambourn. After writing a piece for their newsletter, it struck me that someone in BIAG might have made a study of gasworks in the county, and might be able to help my enquirer. If you can help, please reply to John Coulson, the BIAG editor, so he can publish the additional information.

According to the enquirer, there is a story that the Lambourn gasworks was founded, owned, and operated by women.

In England, it seems that every town had at least one gasworks, and even some villages had one. They were started by private companies, sometimes by large employers who ran pipes from their factories to the houses of employees. Later, the undertakings were often bought out and run by local authorities. At Lambourn, the works was independent until the end. Lambourn is one of those places that was once considered a town, and is now usually thought of as a village, nesting in the Berkshire Downs.

Gas production is believed to have started in 1867, so the coal must have come in by horse and cart. The Lambourn Valley Railway didn’t open until 1898. Kevin Robertson and Roger Simmonds, in their 1984 book on the railway, say that in later years, deliveries of coal for the Lambourn Gas Company were made to Lambourn Station. “This was a small concern, with neither wagons of their own nor an office. Instead, they stored their paperwork in a corner of the goods shed.” Production stopped in 1945, perhaps because of the nationalisation of the gas industry.

Records of the company have so far proved elusive. From old Berkshire directories, it is possible to find the names of the proprietor, or sometimes the secretary, of the company. They are usually the names of men. It would be good to know the origin of the “run by women” story, and to know about the founding, running and closure of the enterprise.

Photographs of the works seem to be non-existent, but in this extract from the Ordnance Survey, you can identify the works from the circular gas-holders – and from Gas House Hill, leading to them.
Bray Film Studios, the home of Hammer House of Horror, has now closed. Founded in 1937, Hammer Films found success post-war with “Quota Quickies”. These were short films made to satisfy a government requirement that cinemas had to show a proportion of non-American films. Many of these were detective stories or romances set, like at the theatre, in the drawing room of a country house. Hammer decided that rather than hire a studio and build a set, they would rent a real country house. Their first was Dial Place near Cookham. Here they completed four films in nine months. However, the owners of nearby country houses were not pleased, especially with the noise of the generators used for lighting.

Hammer then moved to Down Place, on the Thames near Bray. Here they produced a series of “Dick Barton – Special Agent” films based on the radio programmes. In 1956, they produced the science fiction shocker “The Quatermass Experiment”, followed the next year by “The Curse of Frankenstein”. The unexpected success of the gothic horror genre led to ten years of similar films, ending with Peter Cushing in “The Mummy's Shroud”.

Bray Film Studios was subsequently used for television programmes, advertisements, pop music videos (The Rocky Horror Picture Show) and as a rehearsal space. But the film industry was changing with the digital revolution. Hammer Films moved to the Associated British Picture Corporation studios at Elstree.

From an Industrial Archaeology perspective, there is little to record and in any case the site is inaccessible. Down Place is an early 18th century Grade II listed building, and will revert to a 15-bed mansion. The main studio is just a large windowless industrial shed which will be demolished. Ten houses will be built on the site of this and the two “lots” where the outside sets were erected (“Vampires Close?”). Entertainment is an ephemeral industry based on illusion.

Maidenhead Heritage Centre was invited to visit the site but all they could find was a clapper board and a few notices, but there was a 35mm film projector in the cutting room for which they managed to get transport. This is now on display. It was made by Westrex Ltd and the lamp house has a notice “Danger 5000 volts” so presumably
has a carbon arc light. The lens is of course from Taylor, Hobson of Leicester, who supplied most of the film industry. I remember visiting their factory on a school trip and saw how they ground and polished lenses. We then came back to school and experimented with the “optical bench”. The firm still exists but is now a leading specialist in “surface texture analysis”!

As a tribute to Hammer, Maidenhead Heritage Centre will be showing “Dracula” on Halloween – Don't Dare See It Alone!
Welcome to Bray Studios and this celebration to mark the 50th Anniversary of Hammer Film Productions.

Whilst the seeds of the company were first sown in the mid-thirties, it was not until 1949 that Hammer was officially registered and began a production programme of modest features for the home market.

The move to Down Place - Bray Studios - in 1950 coincided with a deal with Lippert Pictures ensuring distribution of Hammer’s features in the US.

The Quatermass Experiment, produced in 1954, hinted at a new direction for Hammer and, with James Carreras handling finance, producer Anthony Hinds had gathered a group of technicians who soon gelled as a team capable of turning out features which belied their tight budgets and equally tight schedules.

Hammer’s first gothic horror, The Curse of Frankenstein, launched the company into the world market and revived the then moribund fantasy genre. Dracula, produced a year later, changed the face of fantasy films forever.

Following films such as The Mummy, The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll and The Brides of Dracula, Hammer began to diversify during the sixties, branching into swashbuckler escapades (The Pirates of Blood River; The Devil-Ship Pirates), psychological thrillers (Taste of Fear; Paranoiac), comedies (A Weekend with Lulu; Watch It Sailor) and prehistoric adventures (One Million Years B.C.; When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth). Hammer’s unique success was recognised in 1968 with the presentation of the Queen’s Award to Industry.

Sadly, the company fell on hard times in the seventies but was successfully revived by current Chairman Roy Skeggs. Today, interest in Hammer continues to grow. Major film festivals and exhibitions dedicated to the company, as well as countless books, video and CD releases are proof of Hammer’s continuing appeal.

Although the company itself has been relatively quiet in recent years there are faint stirrings within the crypt that soon, just like Dracula, Hammer will return. Until then, we hope you enjoy this celebration of Hammer Films’ Fifty years of Fear...
INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY AROUND LONDON ST, READING

Edwin Trout

On 19th June, a group of 14 BIAG members and guests met outside the Reading International Solidarity Centre in London St, for a tour of the industrial archaeology of this locality. Led by guide, Evelyn Williams, with her husband as back marker, we undertook a figure of eight circuit anchored by the sites of Huntley Boorne & Stevens and the Dymore Brown brewery. RISC itself, which many will remember as the former bookseller William Smith, occupies an extended frontage that was originally more than business, including George Lovejoy's subscription library (once the biggest such library outside London). A few paces up the street was the property now trading as the Red Bricks estate agency; although not strictly industrial archaeology, this was once the studio of the artist who painted the official portrait of Phoebe Cusden, on whose initiative the twinning with Dusseldorf was undertaken in the 1940s. A few paces further took us to an entrance, in the middle of which was a metal drainage grate clearly marked with the manufacturer's name: Reading Iron Works. Towards the top of the street was a white-fronted building, which Evelyn explained was once a pub named the Forester's Arms – a nod to the Foresters' Hall opposite. Significantly, this was one of the few pubs owned and operated by Dymore Brown in the early twentieth century, though it was closed in the 1930s as part of a planned restriction on the oversupply of licensed premises. (David Cliffe interjected to comment that we had just walked past a building that had once housed a two-screen private members' cinema in the 1970s). Next was Huntley House, bearing a plaque that proclaimed it as the site of Huntley's very first biscuit shop dating from 1822. [The plaque itself dates it to 1826.] This provided a neat link to the site of the biscuit tin factory across the road, to which we then turned.

Handing out images of the now demolished facades, the bland modern buildings opposite took on the emerging identity of an industrial complex that had expanded into the sprawling plots behind. Huntley Boorne & Stevens were makers of industrial tin boxes for packaging biscuits, before turning in 1868 to the decorative tin factory across the road, to which we then turned. For a few minutes, we discussed Reading Borough Council's approach to heritage conservation, Evelyn indicating where responsibility, interest and influence lay. She confirmed that the Conservation Area Consultative Group had a voice that was listened to and illustrated her claim by pointing to a car park, an application for the development of which had been refused on the grounds of its sensitive historical context. Just behind was the rear elevation of the supermarket. Just beyond the Dymore Brown Brewery, the RISC itself, which many will remember as the former bookseller William Smith, occupies an extended frontage that was originally more than business, including George Lovejoy's subscription library (once the biggest such library outside London). A few paces up the street was the property now trading as the Red Bricks estate agency; although not strictly industrial archaeology, this was once the studio of the artist who painted the official portrait of Phoebe Cusden, on whose initiative the twinning with Dusseldorf was undertaken in the 1940s. A few paces further took us to an entrance, in the middle of which was a metal drainage grate clearly marked with the manufacturer's name: Reading Iron Works. Towards the top of the street was a white-fronted building, which Evelyn explained was once a pub named the Forester's Arms – a nod to the Foresters' Hall opposite. Significantly, this was one of the few pubs owned and operated by Dymore Brown in the early twentieth century, though it was closed in the 1930s as part of a planned restriction on the oversupply of licensed premises. (David Cliffe interjected to comment that we had just walked past a building that had once housed a two-screen private members' cinema in the 1970s). Next was Huntley House, bearing a plaque that proclaimed it as the site of Huntley's very first biscuit shop dating from 1822. [The plaque itself dates it to 1826.] This provided a neat link to the site of the biscuit tin factory across the road, to which we then turned.

Retracing our footsteps and walking around the estate, we paused to note another old and rather precarious wall that might have been part of the factory, and a stone inscribed “Party Wall 1898” that had clearly been re-used in a later garden boundary. There was also a newish building that occupied what we thought might have been the former bowling green. Around the corner was a children's play area, bounded by Victorian iron railings. We stopped to note them, conscious that other aspects of Reading's street furniture – its remaining iron lampposts – are currently under threat. David Cliffe suggested the railings might have been made by the Williams foundry that once operated on part the site now occupied by the Oracle shopping centre. These railings appeared to have been re-located, as the brick wall beneath was modern, as were the associated gates. We headed back to London Street by way of Church Street, passing what was thought to be the old police station, with a characteristic lamp over the blue door, and discussing the challenges of cleaning graffiti off buildings in a conservation area. Looking back down Church St, with the spire of St Giles framed by Georgian brick and older half-timbered buildings, the charming view was quite unexpected – as was the revelation that the corner building once purporting to be a photographer’s studio, had been in fact the respectable front for a brothel.

Heading back down London St., we came to an alley leading east alongside the RISC property. Most notable were the overhanging timber lofts of a building that was described as like a maltings, but for wheat rather than barley. Erected in 1895, according to maps of the period, this building contained two kilns for drying wheat, before it was converted to offices and later into residential apartments. Just beyond, as we emerged into East Street, was a low building of square plan, thought to have been an electricity substation at one time. Despite the name of the street opposite – the misspelled Bourne-Stevens – this was the area previously dominated by the Dymore Brown brewery. A contract supplier, rather than pub operator (apart from a few like the Foresters' Arms), Dymore Brown was notable for supplying the Royal Berkshire Hospital. It was taken over by Morlands in the 1920s, and became a bottling plant before being downgraded to a distribution depot by the 1970s.

For a few minutes, we discussed Reading Borough Council's approach to heritage conservation, Evelyn indicating where responsibility, interest and influence lay. She confirmed that the Conservation Area Consultative Group had a voice that was listened to and illustrated her claim by pointing to a car park, an application for the development of which had been refused on the grounds of its sensitive historical context. Just behind was the rear elevation of the former 'Public Building' (now Great Expectations), built in industrial brick. A few yards further took us to Queen's...
Road and two public sculptures that I, for one, had only vaguely been aware of. Evelyn explained they represented the industries of the area and, sure enough, there was a barrel and a crate of bottled beer among other motifs clasped in the pair of giant bronze hands.

As the tour drew to a close, we rounded the corner of Queen’s Road / London St and gathered outside the classical stone façade of Great Expectations – quite a contrast to the brick ‘barn’ behind. Built in 1843 as Reading’s new Public Building it enjoyed an educational purpose as both a mechanics’ institute and a literary institute; Dickens visited twice. It also contained a printing press at one time. In 1860, however, it closed and was subsequently bought by the Primitive Methodists. After a series of other uses, it finally became a public house, complete with its own micro-brewery, to which members of the group repaired for a drink on completion of the evening’s walk.

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**BEYOND OUR BORDERS**

**No 1 – THE HARECASTLE TUNNELS**

Bob Haskins

The Harecastle Tunnel takes the Trent and Mersey Canal in Tunstall, the most northerly of the six towns within the urban/industrial sprawl/decay of the City of Stoke-on-Trent, north through Harecastle Hill to Kidsgrove. There are two canal tunnels but only one remains operational. The first tunnel of 2,880 yds. was dug by James Brindley (1716-1772) and from 1775 by Hugh Henshall (1734-1816), it opened in 1775. The second tunnel of 2,926 yards was dug by Thomas Telford (1757-1834) and opened in 1827. Between 1827 and 1914 both tunnels were operational with the Brindley tunnel taking southbound traffic and the Telford tunnel northbound traffic. Initially boats were legged through the tunnel with the horse being led over the top. In 1914 the Brindley tunnel closed due to a partial collapse and electric tugs were introduced in the Telford Tunnel. In 1954 the tug service ceased and, as there were no ventilation shafts built during the construction, an airtight door and a large fan were built at the southern end to provide ventilation permitting diesel powered boats to pass through the tunnel.

Photograph 1.1 This is the Kidsgrove end of the tunnel (SJ837541). On the left is the Telford tunnel still in use, left of centre can be seen the earlier Brindley tunnel and to the left of this the tunnel office. The tunnel is manned by staff at both ends who control the access of boats and operate the ventilation fan. A trip through the tunnel takes around 45 minutes and must be booked in advance.
Photograph 1.2 North portal of the gated Brindley Harecastle Tunnel.

Photograph 1.3 This is a view of the southern end of the tunnel in Tunstall (SJ849517). On the far left is the portal of the Brindley Tunnel now very overgrown (view below). The building to the right with the red Transport Trust plaque is the late 19th century tunnel keeper’s hut, the white building in the centre is the tunnel keepers house and to the right is the fan house built in 1954. Note the original Telford tunnel portal is now obscured by the fan house.
What I’ve not mentioned are the Harecastle railway tunnels (North, Middle and South) of 1848 that ran through the hill until the planned electrification of the line made better economic sense to re-route the line to the west of the hill through Bathpool Park rather than open out the tunnel bores for the catenary wires.

For those interested in visiting this site I suggest either a train or drive to Kidsgrove Station and park in the station car park (all day for £2.50). From the station car park walk down to the canal towpath and turn right to view the Kidsgrove tunnel mouths. You’ll probably encounter the CRT (Canal and River Trust) tunnel keeper who is friendly, well informed and always up for a chat. From here you can walk up Boathorse Road over the top of the Harecastle Hill and down to view the southern portals. On your return to Kidsgrove I suggest walking through Bathpool Park alongside the 1966 diversionary route of the WCML (West Coast Main Line).

Before returning home, you may also like to visit the grave of James Brindley who is buried in St James church Newchapel (SJ862544). It’s a ten-minute drive from the station car park and there are off-road parking spaces next to the church. The gravestone can be found by going through the gates and almost immediately on your left you will observe a set of stepping stones leading to the boundary wall and against which is the gravestone. The church of 1878-80 by T. Lewis & Son is not worth a second glance but step round the back into the churchyard and the view from the ridge towards Kidsnove is worth spending a few moments. There’s also a seat to rest those aching limbs weary from walking over Harecastle Hill.

There are six towns within Stoke-on-Trent although Arnold Bennet always referred to the conurbation as the five towns, most famously in his 1902 novel Anna of the Five Towns. From south to north; Longton, Fenton, Hanley, Stoke, Bursc and Tunstall. Newcastle-under-Lyme is to the west of the Trent & Mersey Canal, the WCML and the A500 trunk road and is not part of the Unitary Authority of Stoke-on-Trent.
This year’s conference, held at Worthing College, marked Surrey IAS’ 50th Year. Professor Marilyn Palmer, President of AIA, considered how IA had developed over those years. It began, she suggested, in the 1950’s as an unofficial amateur movement to record the monuments of industrialisation, which had begun in Britain. The destruction of Euston Arch galvanised opinion. The Council for British Archaeology designed the record cards for the National Record of Industrial Archaeology, now held at Historic England. The AIA followed as the traditional industries began to decline. Now professional archaeologists have come onto the scene but there are still, she insisted, opportunities for volunteers to contribute to the subject.

The London Brighton & South Coast Railway may not have had the best rolling stock but their later lines had rather special stations designed by T H Myers with half-timbered station master’s houses. Many have now been lost but examples survive on the Bluebell Line.

A talk on letter boxes was both informative and entertaining. We saw how pillar, wall and lamp boxes had evolved, with changes in design and materials. The latest are made of polypropylene.

The Sussex Mills group, began as an offshoot of the Surrey IAS recording and researching mills. There are now 20 mills open to the public.

In 1986, the discovery of a suitable boiler prompted the Bluebell Railway to reconstruct an Atlantic locomotive around it. This was not a restoration. Everything had to be made from scratch. Modern techniques were used such as CAD from scans of existing drawings. Parts which may originally have been cast were fabricated from steel plate or milled from bars. I was left feeling rather uncertain about the logic of the project which will result in a working look-alike replica locomotive. Perhaps the only way to get a working locomotive these days is to re-create one.

The Chairman of SIAS spoke of what they had achieved in their 50 years. In the 1990’s, they obtained funding for a full-time recorder and now have 4,000 records. These have been used to produce gazetteers and are now stored on CD-ROM. The next development will be to have an on-line database.

The day ended with what can best be described as quirky IA films. BIAG had a display which featured next year’s conference at Windsor.

The following day I visited the Weald & Downland Living Museum. This remarkable enterprise continues to grow with a new entrance building and restaurant nearly ready.

There is also the Downland Gridshell, a modern design building made by traditional methods, which is an artefact store. Unfortunately, the displays of traditional crafts and industries, such as brick making, plumbing, and building needed attention. They were housed in open sheds and the objects and graphics had suffered from damp. The clay pugmills were in an extremely rusty condition, surely there is a rust inhibitor spray they could use?

What could be more appropriate for an IA conference than to hold it in the splendid Llanhilleth Miners’ Institute in the Ebbw Valley. On the wall, a banner from the Risca NUM proclaimed, “Nationalisation 1947 – The Dawn of a New Era”. We even ate lunch to the sound of a male voice choir (recorded). It had been built, we were told, in 1909, with funds from the mine owners and had originally had a swimming pool and a gymnasium in the basement. It fell into disrepair after the mines closed but the Council took it over and restored it with lottery funds to its Grade II status. It now functions as a Community Centre.

The day began with John Evans recalling his 50 years as a bridge engineer, starting with his first job on the Severn bridge. Construction engineering changed more in 10 years than it had in the previous 100 years he recalled.

The Welsh coal export business began when John Nixon, a Geordie, realised that the coal produced less smoke than the cheaper Newcastle coal. He shipped it to Nantes for the French sugar refineries and subsequently to much of France.
Ships were built on the Wye from Hay down to Chepstow. In the upper reaches, the abundant oak trees were used to build trows of up to 80 tons. Chepstow was a transfer port where cargoes were loaded onto wooden ocean going sailing ships also made there. I was especially interested to hear about Finch's yard as they made the girder over-bridges for the Great Western widening to four tracks in Berkshire in 1892. The previous day I had visited Chepstow Museum and learned that Edward Finch of Finch & Willey, Liverpool, came to the town to erect Brunel's curious tubular suspension railway bridge over the Wye. He stayed and started the firm which made both bridges and boats. In WW1, the firm was taken over and expanded as National Shipyard No.1 to produce merchant ships to replace those lost in the conflict. In WW2, it made invasion landing craft. Its last "vessels" were the box girder sections of the Severn Bridge. The firm became part of Mabey & Johnson. They still make bridges but not in Chepstow.

David Cartwright told the fascinating story of how one of his ancestors had gone out to Russia in the 1860's to advise the Czar on how to iron clad the ships of the Imperial Navy. Somehow, they became involved in setting up an iron works in the middle of the desolate steppes of what is now the Ukraine. As the New Russia Company, it made steel for the railways. Many Welsh workers went out to form what became Hughesovska. They lived well but when the revolution occurred in 1917, they had to leave everything and get out in a hurry. The town later became Stalino and is now Donetz.

The day ended with two talks on tram roads, vital to transport raw materials to canals and to furnaces. Robin Williams described those in the Clydach Gorge which he had recorded and researched. Parts have disappeared because of the widening of the Heads of the Valleys road. Len Burland described the rivalry between two tram road owners which ended up in the Court of Chancery, whose records he had consulted.

I took the BIAG display, including the panel on the Finch railway bridge. Next year the conference will be at West Coker, near Yeovil on April 14th.

Whilst in Chepstow, I had a look at the very elegant cast iron road bridge over the Wye. This was designed and built by John Rastrick of Bridgnorth in 1816, and was celebrated last year as the world’s largest pre-1830 cast iron arch road bridge. It was also celebrated as having the world’s largest tides under it. The river can rise 44 feet in 4 hours!

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**FORTHCOMING 2017 MEETINGS PROGRAMME**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12th August 2017</td>
<td>Day Excursion to Swanage and Corfe Castle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th August 2017</td>
<td>AIA 2017 Conference, Moulton</td>
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<tr>
<td>18th September 2017</td>
<td>Talk, Military and Aviation Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>23rd September 2017</td>
<td>Day Excursion to Gloucester Docks and Canal Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>16th October 2017</td>
<td>AGM and Reading Civic Society Talk</td>
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<td>20th November 2017</td>
<td>Talk, Joseph Bazalgette</td>
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<tr>
<td>11th December 2017</td>
<td>Film Show and Social Evening</td>
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All meetings are held on Monday evenings at the Church Hall of St Mary’s Church, Castle St, Reading RG1 7RD and start at 7.30pm. Access to the church hall is through the right-hand side passage.

**Travel Guidance:** By bus, St Mary’s Church Hall is within a two-minute walk from St Mary’s Butts and a five-minute walk from Oxford Road where many Reading Corporation buses stop.

By car, the Church does not have a car park but vehicles may be parked off-road on the market stall hardstanding area in Hosier Street after 18.00. Alternatively, there is a public car park in the Civic Centre adjacent to the Church. St Mary’s Church has a web site with a map: [http://www.cofec.org/stmarys.html](http://www.cofec.org/stmarys.html)

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**EDITOR’S NOTE:**

This issue is rather bigger than usual - mainly due to the extensive notes that Sheila Viner kindly gave me covering her talk in January describing her work on the watermills of the River Pang. Even then, an edited version does not do full justice to the breadth and depth of her talk. I hope I have not missed out anything of great importance – my apologies to her if I have!
Many thanks to Brian Boulter for his article on the Hammer Film Studios at Bray and for providing his reports on SERIAC and SWWRIAC – Hopefully, these will encourage more of us to attend in future. Also, thanks to Edwin Trout for his notes on the walk around the London St area and David Cliffe for the article on Lambourn Gasworks.

You will see that, at Bob Haskin’s suggestion, there is a new regular feature “Beyond our Borders”. The idea is to feature visits of IA interest to sites outside our immediate area. Many thanks to Bob for providing the initial articles (more to come in future issues!). However, we are keen to encourage members who make similar trips to write them up so they can be featured as well. Generally, please keep the articles coming!

John Coulson (jcoulson@theiet.org)

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**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**BIAG DAY EXCURSION (Saturday 12 August 2017)**

A day excursion to the Swanage Railway and the Purbeck Mineral & Mining Museum (Ball Clay) with an opportunity to visit Swanage and Corfe Castle before returning home via the Original White Hart in Ringwood.

The plan is to drive (either individually or in shared cars) down to the Park & Ride at Norden Station (SY957828) to take a ride on the railway (11.00) down to Swanage where there will be an opportunity for an early lunch in their café or enjoy one of the many places to eat in Swanage. We’ll return to Norden on the 1430 train and visit the Purbeck Mineral & Mining Museum and/or the delights of Corfe Castle and its fabulous views of the surrounding area, late afternoon we’ll depart for Ringwood for our evening meal and social before returning home.

Further details available from Bob Haskins or the BIAG website ([www.biag.org.uk](http://www.biag.org.uk)).

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**BIAG DAY EXCURSION (Saturday 23 September 2017)**

Provisional details (subject to confirmation)

A day excursion to Gloucester for a guided walk round the docks and the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal followed by lunch and a visit to the National Waterways Museum finishing with a traditional evening meal and social event at the Highwayman Inn at Elkestone on our return home.

The plan is to drive (either individually or in shared cars) down to the Waterwells Park & Ride (GL2 2AA) in Gloucester and take a short ride into the city centre. We’ll then take a guided walk of the docks and the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal. Following our walk, we’ll break for lunch in the city (spoilt for choice!). After lunch, we’ll pay a group visit to the National Waterways Museum that can be broken by a visit to the Cathedral before we gather to take the bus back to the Waterwells Park & Ride and onwards to our evening meal.

Further details available from Bob Haskins or the BIAG website ([www.biag.org.uk](http://www.biag.org.uk)).