GOODBYE TO DREWS
Jo Alexander-Jones

I started this article because I was sad at seeing the demise of ‘Drews - The Ironmongers’ which sat on the corner of Caversham and Northfield Roads in Reading. However, since I began to write I have learned that this site has been far more than just a useful shop thanks to the work of our colleagues Evelyn Williams and David Cliffe along with those who are hoping to obtain a ‘Local Listing’ for the site. Most of what is written here is their work rather than mine. Drews, we find, is a relative newcomers to this long-occupied site, having only moved here in 1977.

The map below is from 1897 and shows a Malthouse complex on the site. The buildings are believed to have been built between 1871 and 1877. As such, they would have been among the first substantial industrial buildings in this area, joining already present agricultural buildings, saw mills and the White Hart Inn at Caversham Bridge.

This Malthouse belonged to Henry Pendlebury Dowson of Castle Hill. Mr Dowson owned another two malthouses in Reading; one in Tudor Road and one in Malthouse Lane. As well as being involved in the brewing industry he was an active member of Reading’s society and its parliamentary activities.

In 1872, Dowson’s was chosen by H & G Simonds Brewery to supply malt when the pressure for space meant that the brewery turned their own malting area in Bridge Street into beer storage. Dowson’s continued to supply malt to Simonds until 1903.

There isn’t a lot of documentary evidence of the site’s detailed use during this period, but the Bell Tower Community, who are the local community and historic group for this area, believe that the building on Caversham Road is where the malting happened – the germinating, steeping etc. and was also for storage of raw materials and similar; this building shows the characteristic long
elevation with regularly spaced windows of other known malting houses. The somewhat similar-looking buildings that sit behind, labelled No. 1 Northfield Road, would have given additional storage capacity. Where there is now a car park between these buildings would have been the site of the malting kiln.

Below are photographs showing two aspects of the site now, and an example of a malting house for those of you, who like me, may know only a little of the industry and its processes.

If you want to know more about the malting process and the associated buildings then I recommend reading Historic England’s excellent publication ‘Maltings In England’ which is available as a download from their website.

When Simonds stopped needing the malt from Dowson the premises on Caversham Road was occupied by Stransom and Cheney, who were corn, hay and straw merchants and they remained there until after the First World War. By the 1920s a manufacturing chemist, G W Harrison, had moved in sharing the premises with Album and Solomon, who were tailors, and Read and Partners, who were electrical engineers.

Those of you with eagle-eyes may have spotted a ‘ghost sign’ on the side of the main building; it says ‘Smallbone’. Percy H Smallbone was a motor engineer and he came to the site in 1925 and stayed until 1947 when another company in the motor industry arrived. This was Brown Brothers, who are described as motor accessories factors and later as electrical wholesalers.
We see Drews arrive on the site in 1977. The firm was started in 1925 by Percy Drew, a plumber, in a yard off
Minster Street. As the firm grew he moved to Queen's Road and then to the corner of Friar Street and Greyfriars
Road. By this time the focus of the company had moved from plumbing to ironmongery. Percy’s son Archie later
took over, then his son David and finally David’s children assuming charge when he retired in 2006.

My memories of the site are of it being where I went for all of those little items that are either no longer available
or, if they are, come in packs of fifty and I never needed fifty. It saddened me to see it close down at the end of last
year, and I couldn’t let it pass without a little obituary. The shop manager kindly allowed me to photograph the
interior in the shop’s last week.

Let’s hope the site goes on to have a new role that retains its industrial heritage while giving it a useful purpose in
the community in much the same way it has negotiated the centuries so far.

FIRE BRIGADES AROUND WOKINGHAM
(with special reference to the book "More from our village of Spencers Wood")

Brian S Baxter

Before 1938 Berkshire had about two dozen separate fire brigades, more if you counted private ‘Works Fire
Brigades’. They were organised on many different lines including Local Authority owned (and paid), retained
(i.e. paid only for attending fires or drills) and unpaid volunteers. Some Local Authority brigades were not
allowed to attend fires outside the Authorities' boundaries.

Wokingham had a volunteer brigade which often did attend fires outside the town boundary. It was financed
by donations and, like many, by contributions from insurance companies whose ‘risks’ it had helped to save.
Despite this proliferation of fire brigades there was no statute law (outside of London) requiring a local authority to provide 'fire cover' though many did. Many of the volunteer brigades in towns and villages were run almost like gentlemen's clubs. To join a man had to be 'voted in' by existing members and would be expelled for bad conduct. Some brigades received a degree of help from the local authority: Wokingham for instance provided a fire station as part of the town hall complex. The barrier to local authority support was a general reluctance to increase the 'rates' (the forerunner of council tax).

There were a number of brigades to the north-west, north-east and east of Wokingham but none within the county to the south-west. It was not unusual for Wokingham Volunteer Brigade to attend fires in this area. There were no rules preventing volunteer brigades from Hampshire assisting at a fire just over the border. In some cases the brigades had formal working arrangements to assist one another when pressed.

For half a century the government had been looking into the provision of fire services and there had been a number of committees and studies, none of them resulting in major legislation. Various acts touched on the subject in diverse ways, but there was no overall update until the appointment of the 'Departmental Committee on Fire Brigade Services'. This first met in 1936 under the leadership of Lord Riverdale and was thereafter known as the Riverdale Committee. It produced its report by the end of that year. The government then deliberated for more than a year before introducing a bill to Parliament in 1938. This proposed to adopt a lot of the Committee's recommendations but not all. The Act was quickly passed despite many reservations from professional firemen and MPs representing local authorities.

The Act's most important feature was that, for the first time, local authorities were made responsible for the fire protection of their citizens. These authorities were to be the county boroughs, urban and rural districts.

Existing brigades in small towns or villages could be absorbed into a new Urban District Council (UDC) or Rural District Council (RDC) brigade but, if they were volunteer brigades and wished to remain separate, their continued existence was permitted so long as they agreed to provide the fire service under contract to the local authority. In some cases these brigades had obtained financial support by parish rates as well as donations. If they were to continue under the authority of a district council they were now eligible to receive financial support from the rates of the whole district. Another source of funding had been payments by those individuals or businesses whose premises had been damaged by fire. Such payments were no longer required since the fire protection was to be free. Yet another source had been payments to brigades by those insurance companies whose 'risks' had been saved. To the dismay of the volunteer brigades the new Act relieved insurance companies from the obligation to make such payments. One of the Riverdale proposals not taken up by the government was that it should take more responsibility for financing fire brigades.

Proposals for national standards and a means of checking them were taken up and the Act provided for a Fire Service Commission to create standards and systems of checks to ensure they were met. Many local authorities were angered that the central government was to some extent taking control of their fire brigades through this commission and its proposed inspections, yet was not making any financial provision. With the loss of insurance company contributions the whole burden fell upon rate payers.

Some RDCs had, long before, voluntarily become fire authorities and in most cases were required to obtain special authority to raise 'rates' for this purpose. Now all had the authority but with the attendant responsibility. The act included a 'let out' clause enabling a local authority with no fire brigade to pay a neighbouring authority with one for its services. Where an area had a long standing independent volunteer brigade, as in Wokingham town, this could continue but became contractually required to provide the service. The 'let out' clause, when taken up, was much cheaper than starting a new fire brigade.

Another provision of the act was to require brigades to come to local arrangements for neighbouring assistance where this was not already happening. The local effect was that Wokingham RDC was obliged to form a brigade and the Town's volunteer brigade was no longer expected to leave the town boundaries, other than for cases of mutual assistance.

The RDC appointed Mr Harold Pearson, a former member of the Leeds Police Fire Brigade, to supervise the setting up of the new RDC brigade with the intention that he should become its 'Superintendent'. This terminology was common at the time but later changed to 'Chief Fire Officer'. Since funding for all the changes now fell upon rate payers local authorities were very anxious to keep costs low. Mr Pearson had therefore to justify all expenditure in great detail, whether rental for buildings, uniforms, including his own, and fire-fighting equipment.
In the year before the passing of the Fire Brigades Act the government had passed the Air Raid Precautions Act which, among other things, created the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS). AFS sections were to be attached to existing fire brigades so whilst creating a new Brigade, the Superintendent had also to create its AFS component; thus the timing of the two Acts was most inconvenient. Immediate problems meant that it was some months later that Mr Pearson submitted his comprehensive proposals to the RDC Fire Brigade Committee, the Water and Drainage Committee, having previously taken on this responsibility.

The RDC inherited fire brigades at Sonning, Twyford and Wargrave, all to the north and north-west of Wokingham, but none to the south or west. There was then more 'space' between Reading and Wokingham, and Reading's Borough Brigade was not allowed to attend fires over the boundary. Mr Pearson therefore needed to create a brigade HQ with a main fire station and another sub-station to cover the south-west 'gap'. The proposal was for a new main fire station in the area of Loddon Bridge with a sub-station somewhere in Shinfield. The existing pre-war brigades would cover the north of the RDC area, though it was probable that the one at Twyford would become only an AFS station. Both Sonning and Wargrave would continue as independent brigades under operational control of the RDC. With an HQ adjacent to the proposed main station it was argued that this organisation would provide a much sounder basis for the coverage of the RDC area and for the attachment of the AFS component.

By the time of this report the war had already started and the RDC's ARP expenditure was too great to consider major land purchases or building projects so that part of the proposal was 'deferred'.

It seems the new brigade soon acquired an ancient, solid tyred Dennis fire engine, believed to be Wokingham Town's 1915 pump registered BL 035. In 1938 the volunteer brigade had purchased a new Leyland with a 50ft wheeled escape ladder. There was still the second Dennis, MO 920, now upgraded with pneumatic tyred wheels, so these two could easily cover the town which also had its own AFS sections. With the arrival of the new Leyland, registered AMO 654, it is likely that the ancient 1915 Dennis would have been scrapped but the RDC's needs most likely gave it a brief reprieve. I do not have a precise date for the RDC's acquisition of the Dennis, but Mr Pearson reported in early 1940 that it had become very unreliable and a replacement was urgently needed. If the vehicle had been transferred in 1938 it would have needed housing and there are some suggestions that it was kept in Spencers Wood, there being nowhere suitable in Shinfield. If there was a delay between the formal starting of the RDC brigade and the acquisition of the Dennis, it might have been the period referred to by Mrs Clarke's father as 'a fire brigade with no fire engine'.

Recruiting for the AFS began in 1938 in some places and with growing intensity thereafter. The scheme called for volunteers to be trained as firemen who would be provided with one uniform. AFS sections would be issued with equipment, including pumps, by the government and the men were to be trained by the existing peacetime fire brigades and housed by the local authority.

The government began to order from manufacturers what was to become a total of more than twenty thousand pumps, mostly mounted on trailers. It was at first left to the local authority to find vehicles to pull them and carry the crew. Many vehicles were acquired on loan or on hire; some were purchased using a totally inadequate government grant and some were donated. Many were old, in poor repair and insufficiently powerful to do what was needed. It did not help that many other ARP services were looking for vehicles and others were being purchased and, later, requisitioned by the Armed Forces. To give adequate fire protection against a perceived threat of widespread bombing each fire brigade was required to set up many 'AFS sections'. Where these were to be equipped with a trailer pump they needed garages. Throughout the country thousands of men needed training.

When war was declared in September 1939 the whole ARP apparatus was mobilised and among the many emergency measures was the blackout which required alterations to vehicle lights, white paint on vehicles and static obstructions and the blacking out of windows on buildings, including those of the local authority. This all added to costs.

The creation of the AFS, just as some RDC brigades were forming and themselves seeking accommodation, equipment and manpower placed a massive burden on those involved: It is not clear where Mr Pearson was based at this time. Most likely it was at the RDC's offices at Shute End, Wokingham, but he had to be constantly on the move negotiating for premises and vehicles, trying to weld one new and three existing fire brigades into an integrated whole and, at the same time, setting up an element of the AFS. To cover the ground he arranged purchase in March 1940 of a second-hand car for which there was a Home Office grant. This was the Rolls Royce mentioned in the book - it cost £40! The Home Office grant was only made for
towing vehicles, not for a domestic vehicle for fire chiefs so, having used it for a time as his personal transport, Mr Pearson had to surrender it for its intended role. A Rolls Royce was ideal for this work, having a powerful engine. With a driver and pump crew of at least four, plus extra fire-fighting kit, a ladder and, in some cases, a ton of trailer pump to pull, the average small family car could not have coped, even though that is what some AFS sections were given for want of anything better.

Having convinced the RDC that the old Dennis was no longer viable, a replacement was sought. In the July of 1940 issue of the 'Trade' magazine, 'Fire' an advert, was placed calling for tenders for the supply of a fire engine to Wokingham RDC. Seven manufacturers in the UK tendered - not one still exists as a fire engine maker. The tender from Dennis Brothers of Guildford was accepted and they supplied a second-hand, but refurbished, Dennis Ace pump with New World body. This meant access was at the rear on each side of the pump and there were two rows of inward facing seats. This style was a great deal safer than the, then, traditional fire engine with outward facing seats on each side. Many firemen were thrown off this style of body on corners or bumpy roads, sometimes with fatal results, so the RDC's new machine was rather up-market. It was supplied in 1940. The old Dennis was sold for scrap for £20. If it departed before the new Dennis arrived, this too might have been the time of a fire brigade with no fire engine! Intriguingly there are records of payments of some kind to Sonning and Wargrave for engines 'standing by' at other stations. They probably covered the RDC's southern territory while the new pump was awaited. Certainly, Sonning had placed a fire engine at the NIRD at Shinfield for a time.

Several AFS posts were being set up, some with trailer pumps such as at Shinfield where a Bentley car was provided as a towing vehicle. The Finchampstead section, officially entitled 'Wokingham Without', was equipped with a Beresford Stork light trailer pump. Some sections were equipped with a two-man manual pump. This was a see-saw shaped pump with handles at each end, worked by two men alternately pushing down. Water could be taken from a pool, stream or hydrant and would supply one or two hoses, but with rather limited pressure, sufficient to quell a small fire if caught in time. Arborfield was allocated such a pump and the crew travelled in an open Austin 7 car with the pump, hose and other kit in a small trailer. Four men could, just, fit in an Austin 7 but with such a load it was never going to get anywhere in a hurry.

In March 1940 Mr Pearson notified the Water and Drainage Committee that Mr Magill of 'Highlands', Spencers Wood, had offered the use of his coach house as an 'Auxiliary Fire Station'. From this use of the word 'auxiliary' if is not clear if it was meant solely for the AFS or for 'temporary' use by the main RDC brigade. Either way the new Dennis was kept there initially. The book mentions the old Dennis being painted grey. This was left to the choice of individual brigades, most of which kept their pre-war vehicles in red. The AFS equipment was all painted battleship grey on issue and, where vehicles had been acquired on a more permanent basis to pull the AFS trailer pumps or to carry emergency water tanks, these were usually painted grey.

Part of the Government's war planning was to divide the country into twelve regions which could, if the central government was destroyed, rule the country on a local basis. Certain responsibilities devolved upon Regional Headquarters while the central government remained intact. One was to organise mutual support within the region of the various ARP services so a badly hit city could call in help from neighbouring local authorities. When things got really bad one region could call for help from other regions. It was under this scheme that hundreds of firemen and fire engines were sent to distant blitzed cities, a few unfortunately never to return.

Although the war had actually begun in September 1939 there was little sign of the huge air attacks forecast by gurus in the 1930's. This was the phoney war which gave the armed forces and the ARP time to train and now to receive new equipment. Whilst there had been some air attacks, the 'Blitz' as it is usually defined, began in September 1940 when the Luftwaffe switched from bombing airfields and aircraft factories to the constant bombing of London. Even before this, under the reinforcement schemes of the ARP Act, Wokingham RDC fire brigade, like dozens of others, had been sent to the aid of cities under attack. Some detachments were away for days. For some, such as Newbury's, the men returned only for their funerals. At first Hitler had banned the bombing of London and it happened only because some German pilots were lost. Unaware of the reason, the RAF retaliated and thereafter the Blitz was unrestricted.

Some fire brigades worked on the basis that the AFS was formed specifically for war so only sent reinforcements from among their AFS. Other brigades took the view - it is one war in which we are all involved - so their pre-war, peacetime, firemen were also sent on occasions to distant places to help. Mr Pearson's reports to the RDC include many records of men and pumps and often water carriers, known to the fire service as 'Mobile Dam Units' (MDUs), going to distant battered cities. High explosive bombs frequently destroyed the water mains in cities and there was a need to pump water from lakes or rivers and sometimes the sea to deal with fires. If continuous bombing cut the hoses relying water from a distant source the MDUs
were the fall-back. They were always in great demand. Large lorries carried a 1000 gallon dam and smaller ones 500 gallons. Larger pumps could empty a large dam in one minute!

The greatest problem in the early 'blitz' was the effectiveness of control, there being no radio communications and the employment of reinforcements. There were in Britain, after the implementation of the 1938 Act, still about 1600 separate fire brigades with no standardisation of rank titles, uniform badges or equipment fittings. Reinforcements often had difficulty identifying who was in charge and found their hoses would not connect to local hydrants nor to the hoses of the local brigade. Command orders, drills and procedures differed. As the London Blitz continued into 1941 these problems increased and as more cities were attacked the problems spread. Senior fire officers persuaded the Ministry of Home Security that complete standardisation was needed and this could only be achieved by nationalisation. Legislation was rushed through Parliament and took effect in August 1941 with the formation of the National Fire Service (NFS). This absorbed all the peacetime fire brigades together with their AFS components. All that remained outside the NFS were the fire services of the Armed Forces, of some Government Ministries and those of hundreds of industrial firms. All those within the UK were drawn into local agreements with the NFS to maximise resources. Incidentally some senior fire officers had been advocating a national fire service well before the war began.

The NFS organisation was based on the existing geographical regions which were to each have a number of 'Fire Forces', each of which was divided into geographical 'divisions', themselves with sub-divisions and individually numbered stations. Maximum use was made of pre-war and established AFS accommodation but the old boundaries between town and RDC disappeared. The Fire Forces spread across county boundaries. The Reading and Wokingham area was covered by 15 Fire Force with its HQ at Taplow. Under the new arrangements all were NFS with no distinction between what had been a peacetime brigade or an AFS unit. Consequently vehicles were redeployed as the NFS demanded and the RDC's nice new Dennis moved into Wokingham town's fire station alongside their new Leyland. The station at 'Highlands' in Spencers Wood was brought up-to-date with new towing vehicles. A nationwide system for identifying parts of the NFS and marking its stations and vehicles resulted in Wokingham's station being 15A2Z with Winnersh 15A2Y, Shinfield (probably at Spencers Wood) 15A2X and Finchampstead 15A2W.

The pre-war brigades controlling AFS sections had been complaining at length to the Ministry about the inadequacy of towing vehicles. Few of the available car-based types were really powerful enough and those that had been were usually ageing cast-offs. By early 1941 the Ministry accepted that it must provide suitable vehicles and so a standard Auxiliary Towing Vehicle (ATV) was designed. It was basically a van built on an Austin K2 2-ton load capacity truck chassis. Thousands were ordered and started to become available just about the time the NFS formed. Despite this huge order and always conscious that one devastating air raid might destroy a solitary source, a second supplier was selected. Some reports state 4000 Austins were built but Ford at Dagenham were contracted to provide another version. These used an existing military truck chassis with single wheels at the rear and fat cross-country tyres. The bodies were very similar to those of the Austin, an open-backed van with inward facing seats under which were the kit lockers. A canvas curtain was fitted at the rear to keep out rain and, not very effectively, exhaust fumes. Both types had standard towing hooks for trailer pumps and carried 30ft ladders on the roof. There were only about 400 of the Ford version and whilst several Austins survive in museums or with collectors, only one Ford has been restored. Remarkably the photo on page 163 of the book shows one of each type, the Ford on the left.

The appearance of London firemen in Spencers Wood was undoubtedly due to a scheme that had been set up to give them some respite from the continuous attacks from September 1940 to May 1941. Batches of firemen and fire women, who operated control rooms and carried out other tasks, would be swapped with a detachment of personnel from a quieter area. The London crews were still operational but were expected to be less busy. If the London crews 'resting' at Spencers Wood were subjected to a direct raid, they must have felt somewhat aggrieved.

With the establishment of allied armies in France after D-Day and the petering out of V weapon attacks, the NFS began to thin out. Many stations were closed but at what point the one at Spencers Wood closed is not known. The NFS issued periodic instructions to be observed country-wide. At some stage after VJ Day they authorised a return to red paint for fire engines but for economy reasons it was at first to be confined to vehicles which were either due for overhaul or just needed repainting anyway. Photos exist, all black and white, showing quite elaborate decoration and lining during the repaints. This was more likely to have been in yellow than gold.

The NFS finally disbanded in 1948 having, the previous year, faced a massive challenge with the Thames Valley floods following the melting of snow after one of the worst winters, 1946/7, in living memory.
The post-war re-design of fire brigades sought to retain the undoubted advantages of the NFS, mainly its standardisation. Instead of a reversion to hundreds of separate brigades of all sizes, the new legislation moved the responsibility for fire cover to cities, county boroughs and counties, thus leading to the 'Berkshire and Reading Fire Brigade'. The better surviving pre-war fire engines were retained, together with hundreds of the wartime utility vehicles, some of which were rebuilt and brought up-to-date. Gradually as resources became available a sprinkling of new fire engines appeared, starting a few years after denationalisation.

Locally, under the new system, fires in Spencers Wood could be dealt with by stations in Reading and Wokingham, depending on which had pumps available at the time.

Soon after the NFS formed Harold Pearson was seconded to the Admiralty as a Fire Adviser. He later became the senior NFS officer on the Isle of Wight, and then took charge of fire prevention measures for PLUTO, the pipeline which was used to pump fuel to France for the armies in the North-West Europe campaign after D-Day. He was next promoted and became the Deputy Chief Officer of 15 Fire Force. Post denationalisation he served in the Hampshire Fire Brigade in the rank of Divisional Officer, but ill health caused him to retire in early 1952.

Much more detail needs to be uncovered on the short-lived RDC fire brigades around the country, most only lasting from 1938 to 1941. There is also variable coverage of the NFS period 1941 to 1948. Not only did the NFS regard itself as 'the 4th Arm' (after the Navy, Army and Air Force) but it considered that, as a wartime defence organisation, the secrecy applied to the Armed Forces should also apply to it. Because of this and with the availability of camera film being so sparse in in wartime, in relation to its size, few photos were taken.

With the delay in returning to a peace time fire service, many new county brigades were keen to forget the NFS and all its works and masses of material was destroyed, which today's historians would wish to have. Therefore the odds and ends in private hands which emerge via local history societies, local record offices and in private collections have a significant importance.

These notes have been partly based on earlier research carried out by:

- **Simon Adamson**, later Assistant Divisional Officer, Dorset Fire Brigade
- **Jim Bell**, author of the booklet 'A short history of Wokingham Volunteer Fire Brigade'
- **Nigel Crompton**, former member of Royal Berkshire Fire Brigade
- **Richard Hawkins**, whose father and grandfather both served in the Wokingham Volunteer fire Brigade
- The late **Ray Piggott**, author of a research paper ‘The Auxiliary Fire Service in Winnersh between 1938 and 1941’
- Also included is material from the reminiscences of the late **Reg Puddephatt** whose fire service career began in the Bournemouth AFS, then as a staff officer at HQ 15 Fire Force of the NFS and finally in the Berkshire and Reading Fire Brigade

References include:
- The Air Raid Precautions Act 1937
- The Fire Brigades Act 1938
- The booklet and research paper referred to above
- Reports to and minutes of meetings of the Wokingham RDC Fire Brigade Committee
- Relevant issues of the magazine 'Fire'
- Various issues of the Fire Brigade Society's journal, 'Fire Cover'
- The book 'More from our village of Spencers Wood'

This article’s author was a career soldier for 30 years with a lifelong interest in military history. Having lived through World War II, the Home Front, and then Fire Brigades’ history took precedence. He was also on the staff of the REME Museum for 32 years, 17 of them as the Technical Historian.

**Editor’s Note:** The author advises that he would welcome any feedback on this article. He may be contacted via Mrs Bampton of the Spencer’s Wood Local History Group. I can provide her telephone number to members on request.
A WIDER PERSPECTIVE OF INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Brian Boulter

When I first attended classes on industrial archaeology, the emphasis was on individual buildings. We learned how to appreciate them, understand their function, research their history and to record them by photography (b/w) and measured drawings. These were the techniques I used when recording local watermills and brickworks, the only industrial buildings near me.

Since moving to South Wales, where industrial monuments are thick on the ground, I have had to widen my perspective. Not far away lays Blaenavon with its Ironworks, Big Pit and heritage railway. It forms a UNESCO World Heritage Industrial Landscape which includes not only the various industrial monuments, but also the roads, canals, tramroads and railways which linked them all together and enabled products to be sent to ports for shipment to the world. Also included are the rows of houses, the chapels and of course the splendid Workmen's Hall.

As you may expect I have been reading all the various books, guides and leaflets on the area, including Alexander Cordell's “Rape of the Fair Country”. Some of the sites I had visited with son Chris, but I am now exploring them more leisurely. Much has been recorded and reported and I am not about to start new projects. But I have noted one or two interesting features which I may tell you about.

My illustrations are of Blaenavon Ironworks with its terrace of workers cottages. These are furnished in a series of time frames.
PERRY & CO, READING

David Cliffe

This piece of ironwork was dug up recently by a friend of a friend who lives at Bearwood, near Wokingham. She was digging up some brambles in her overgrown garden, and there it was. The name on the round part is just about discernible as Perry & Co., Reading.

According to the history of the Reading Ironworks Company, by Roy Green and Jonathan Brown, Thomas and James Perry came to Reading in 1818 and set up a foundry at No. 6 Horn Street (now called Southampton Street). In 1836 the firm moved round the corner into Katesgrove Lane, with a frontage to the River Kennet. It was very successful for around 70 years, but went out of business in 1887. I haven't been able to find the firm called Perry & Co. in directories. In 1827 the firm was being run by Joseph Perry and Joseph Barrett. Ten years later and it's Perry, Barrett & Exall, and ten years after that it's Barrett, Exall and Andrewes. By 1864 it's the Reading Ironworks Company. So it looks as though this object was made fairly early in the company's existence.

What the lucky finder would like to know is what kind of machine it was part of. It's 55 cm. tall – just under 2 ft., so presumably it would have been mounted on a stand or bench when in use. Perhaps it was one end of a mangle, and the other end of it is in the ground nearby. If you have any ideas, please contact the editor, and he'll pass the information on.

Incidentally, only a few days before I received this request for information from a friend, BIAG had a request for information about a cast iron milestone on the Bath Road near the end of Berkeley Avenue, which was also made by the Perry brothers.
MYSTERY OBJECT No 2

John Joyes

Nobody had the answer to last issue’s Mystery Object, so I’m still in the dark. But just to compensate, here is an easy one for you. No prizes for correct answers.

The unit is a chrome plated brass drum about six inches diameter, inside which is a fine clock turning a paper chart. When the glass front is closed it cannot be re-opened without turning the rim on the back of the drum, which causes a pin prick to be punched on the chart. Further turning of the rim exposes a numbered cavity in the back of the drum, there are eight cavities altogether, and closing each cavity advances the chart pin-pricker to a different track on the chart and punches a new mark. The case can only be opened again when a full revolution of the rim is complete, and the chart is punched a final time.

BEYOND OUR BORDERS

No 11 – SHEFFIELD & TINSLEY CANAL BASIN

Bob Haskins

Following a ten-minute walk from Sheffield (Midland) Railway Station you can be within the small attractive tucked-away urban area of Victoria Quays; the basin of the Sheffield & Tinsley Canal (SK360876).

The Sheffield Canal opened on 22nd February 1819 running for 3.9 miles between the city centre through twelve locks to join the navigable River Don in Tinsley. The first proposal to connect land-locked Sheffield to the sea via the Trent and Humber was 120 years before in 1697, but this came to nothing. One of the benefits of the opening of the canal was access to the cheap coal from South Yorkshire. However, the canal only enjoyed twenty years of operation before the new railways began to take away traffic. The opening of the Sheffield to Rotherham railway in 1838 halved its income in five years. Some trade continued up to the early 1970s. Following a period as a remainder waterway there has been renewed interest in the canal for its recreational and amenity value. The greatly improved canal towpath now forms a linear green park from the city centre to Tinsley and Meadowhall.

From the rear exit of the railway station follow the tram line and cross Castle Square on an elevated footway to drop down onto Exchange Place with the front of the Terminal Warehouse (Grade II* listed) on your right. The five story Terminal Warehouse was built in 1819 as the destination of the canal. Pass in front of this building and down onto Wharf Street and you’ll see, on your left, the curving two-story stone buildings (Grade II listed) of the offices for the coal and lime merchants built by the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincoln Railway in 1851 as part of the Park Goods Yard complex.
Turning to your right you have the Grain Warehouse of 1895 (Grade II listed). Around the corner you get a rear view of the Terminal Warehouse now converted to offices (see Photograph 11.2 below). The three-story brick building on the opposite side of the basin is the former head office building of the Tinsley Park Coal Company, an important customer of the canal.

Following the amalgamation of the Sheffield Canal with River Don Navigation and the formation of the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation the facilities at the basin were modernized with the building of the Straddle Warehouse (Grade II listed) in 1895.
Before you leave the basin for the canal towpath to Tinsley you will see on your left the former head office and warehouse of Sheaf Works (Grade II listed), the first large steelworks in Sheffield to use steam power. It was built between 1822 and 1826 and was the first factory to make use of the Sheffield and Tinsley Canal.

If you have the time and energy you may like to walk down the canal towpath to Tinsley Locks (2 hours) and return to the city centre using the Sheffield Tram (20 minutes). If you have a concessionary travel card this can be used on the tram system. I believe this to be the only UK tram network that accepts the pass. If you’re feeling exceptionally energetic you could walk back from Tinsley along the Five Weirs Walk (between 2 and 3 hours), using part of the national coast to coast path, the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT).

Notes.
2. There were originally twelve locks but locks seven and eight have been combined into one single deep lock to allow construction of a new railway bridge in 1959. The locks are now numbered 1 to 6, 7/8, and 9 to 12.

**ANSWERS TO PUZZLE PAGE No. 1 (Ref BIAG News No 49, p9)**

Bob Haskins

A
Anderton Boat Lift (SJ647752) and the River Weaver. The boat lift is a two-caisson lift lock in the village of Anderton overlooking the former ICI Soda-Ash works in Winnington near Nantwich in Cheshire. It provides a 50 ft vertical link between the River Weaver (lower level) and the Trent & Mersey Canal (upper level). In the foreground of the photograph is the River Weaver, out of view to the left was ICI works and above the embankment on the right is the Trent & Mersey Canal. It’s a Scheduled Monument.
https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1021152

B
Butterley Iron Works Yard and Gate House (SK400516) in Ripley, Derbyshire. Looking through the gates you can see the remains of the former Butterley Iron Works Yard with the octagonal Gate House to the right. Everything and everyone going in to and out of the works would have to pass the gate house. The whole site currently stands derelict awaiting a developer. The Gate House is a Grade II listed building.
https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1158931

C
Lune Aqueduct (SD484638) taking the Lancaster Canal over the River Lune in Lancaster. It’s a Grade I listed building.
https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1362451
D  Statute of the “The Scutcher” in Millom (SD172800). The town of Milom in Cumbria developed following the discovery of iron ore at Hodbarrow Mine in 1855. The scutcher is the man who stopped the iron ore tubs using an iron bar and his own strength. If you do get to Milom you must visit the excellent town museum housed in the railway station building.  
https://www.visitcumbria.com/wc/millom

E  Rolling Canal Bridge over the Ulverston Canal in Ulverston in Cumbria (SD304780). The bridge carried the former Barnsea Branch Line across the canal. The accumulator tower that provided the power to operate hydraulically operated bridge is just out of site hidden behind the trees on the left of the photograph. It’s a Grade II listed building.  
https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1404328

F  Lowesmoor or Westbury Street Railway Bridge over the Worcester & Birmingham Canal (SO853554) in Worcester. Behind the photographer and to the left is the entrance to Lowesmoor Canal Basin of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal.

Editor’s Note: Members are invited to send their own photographs to the editor and challenge colleagues.

CORRECTION TO BIAG NEWS No 49

An error slipped into our BIAG News No 49 on page 2 of the excellent article by our member Jack Fuller. The photograph depicts a standard coal fired locomotive albeit used by Huntley & Palmers and not a fireless as stated in the caption. They did also use fireless locomotives and one example is shown below.
FORTHCOMING BIAG 2019/20 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

We would love to have your ideas, or even better your contributions to the second half of the BIAG programme. Amongst our members we have a wealth of experience and knowledge which everyone would love to hear and share. If you don’t think you can manage a whole session alone we can mix and match two or three talks – don’t be shy, come on and volunteer – contact Jo on contact@BIAG.ORG.UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Organizer</th>
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<tr>
<td>9 December</td>
<td>IA Christmas Social</td>
<td>BIAG Committee</td>
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<td>Our annual IA entertainment festivities with an opportunity to socialise over mince pies and refreshments</td>
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<td>20 January</td>
<td>Engineering Our Heritage</td>
<td>David Hunter</td>
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<td>On the heritage work undertaken by the Institute of Civil Engineers</td>
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<td>17 February</td>
<td>Reading’s Bell Tower Area Industrial Heritage</td>
<td>David Neale - Bell Tower Community Association</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Situated between Reading and Caversham this area has a wealth of industrial sites including the old Cox and Wyman printing works</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 March</td>
<td>Thames Valley Archaeological Services (Provisional)</td>
<td>TVAS</td>
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<td>Their work and involvement in industrial archaeology</td>
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<td>20 April</td>
<td>The Fascinating Story of the Filament Light Bulb</td>
<td>John Holden</td>
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<td>A sequel to our previous talk on ‘The First Electric Light’</td>
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<td>16 May</td>
<td>Our Secret History: Industries in Katesgrove, Reading</td>
<td>Evelyn Williams</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An area of bricks, iron, sail and much more</td>
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<td>21 September</td>
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<td>19 October</td>
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<td>16 November</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 December</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 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

OTHER FORTHCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

- 8th January - The Victorian Plentys - Ellie Thorne, senior archivist at the Berkshire Record Office, on the Plenty company, whose innovative engineering ranged from ploughs to lifeboats, bringing prosperity and employment to Newbury over 200 years. Shaw Church Hall, RG14 2DR. Free parking. Berkshire Family History Society
- 15th February - The development of internal combustion engines as motive power for narrowboats. The Railway & Canal Historical Society. Meetings held at Briar Rose Hotel, Birmingham West Midlands
- 19th February - The Regent's Canal and its 200th Anniversary. GLIAS
- 3rd March - Sentinels of the Sea - The Amazing History of Light Houses – Surrey Industrial History Group at Church House Guildford, 20 Alan Turing Road, Guildford GU2 7YF
- 11th March – Newbury in Old Photographs. Shaw Church Hall, RG14 2DR Berkshire Family History Society
- 18th March - A Victorian Journalist's view of London's Industry, GLIAS
- 2nd May – SERIAC – to be hosted by GLIAS at Goldsmith College, New Cross, London. Details awaited

NB: GLIAS (Greater London IA Society) lectures are held at 6.30pm in the Gallery, Alan Baxter Ltd, 75 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6EL. The Gallery is through the archway and in the basement at the rear of the building.

Details of our meetings and other events of interest are published on our website – www.biag.org.uk
EDITOR’S NOTE:

Another even bigger bumper sized issue this month – mainly because of Brian Baxter’s article on fire brigades around Wokingham (Many thanks to Jim Greenaway and his sister for that!). I had originally thought that I would have to split it into two parts over two issues of BIAG News but I had difficulty in finding a suitable break point! Thanks also to Jo Alexander-Jones, David Cliffe and John Joyes for their articles and to Bob Haskins for his puzzle answers and another “Beyond our Borders”!

On a different note, I took over editing BIAG News from Robin Wallace Sims ten years ago and I feel that now is a good time to pass on the editorship and hopefully introduce some fresh blood and new ideas! Jo Alexander-Jones has kindly agreed to take over from the next issue so I hope you will continue to support her as you have supported me. Please continue to keep your contributions coming – we do now seem to be getting good numbers of articles from a variety of members which is excellent news.

John Coulson

THANKS TO THE EDITOR:

We on the BIAG Committee, and I am sure all of the membership, wish to send a hearty thanks to John for his commitments to the group in both editing and contributing to the BIAG newsletter over the last ten years. His quiet persistence in chasing, collecting and collating the articles has given us a tremendous archive of IA information to pass on to future generations. Thanks, John – a job well done.

For general BIAG business, please contact the Secretary: GRAHAM SMITH (Tel: 01635-580356) 114 SHAW ROAD, NEWBURY, BERKS, RG14 1HR or email secretary@biag.org.uk

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:

JOHN COULSON (Tel: 0118 9402526) 11 RIDGEWAY, WARGRAVE, READING, RG10 8AS or e-mail newsletter@biag.org.uk (please note new e-mail address)

November 2019

Printing and distribution: Bob Haskins