

SOUTH WEST WALES INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

CYLCHLYTHYR

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No.3, March 1973.

Editorial Committee: F.G. Cowley, S. Frank, P.R. Reynolds.

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Since the last issue of this Newsletter a number of changes have been made in the Society's officers. Mr. R.O. Roberts remains Chairman, but the following new appointments have been made:

Secretary: Dr. S. Frank,  
c/o The Library,  
University College of Swansea,  
Singleton Park,  
Swansea,  
SA2 8PP.

Treasurer: P.R. Reynolds,  
12 Beaconsfield Way,  
Sketty,  
Swansea,  
SA2 9JR.

Photographer: H. Holloway,  
105 Gorwydd Road,  
Gowerton,  
Swansea,  
SA4 3AN.

A word about the function of the photographer: Mr. Holloway is building up an archive of colour slides illustrating the industrial monuments of the Swansea area. So far the collection includes Ynyscedwyn Ironworks, Scott Pit, the narrow boat on the canal at Tonna, Kidwelly Tinsplate Works and Loughor Zinc Works. The slides are, of course, the property of the Society, but they are in the custody of Mr. Holloway in the Photographic Department of the University College Library. It goes without saying that one of the functions of a society such as ours is to create a photographic record of the industrial remains in its area - a record that increases in value as time goes on. Even in the short time since these photographs were taken a number of changes have occurred, or are imminent, which already give these slides an historical value. A number of black and white photographs are normally taken on field days and excursions. Copies of these are also held by the Photographer. If any member of the Society requires copies of any of these prints they are available at cost price from Mr. Holloway. This is also the case with the slide collection.

Subscriptions. The Society's financial year runs from January to December, which means that subscriptions for 1973 are now due (£1, but for students and O.A.P.s, 50p). If you haven't already done so, please remit the appropriate amount to the Treasurer. A form is enclosed for your convenience.

INFORMATION REQUIRED

1. RAILWAY BRIDGES. In his book 'Civil engineering: railways' (Longman, 1971), Bryan Morgan writes as follows: 'It (i.e. the South Wales Railway) also employed a new form of rail devised by W.H. Barlow which aimed at dispensing with the longitudinal members of the 'baulk' track by widening the flanges of the rail itself so that they bore directly on the ballast ... Fragments of it are reported ... to be ignominiously incorporated into a bridge over a disused canal outside Swansea'. Does anyone know of this bridge? Is Morgan's report correct and up to date? Is the bridge still to be seen? Information to the editor, please. (N.B. The 'baulk' track referred to was the method used on the old broad gauge, whereby the rail was laid on longitudinal baulks of timber braced to each other by cross ties in place of sleepers.)

2. SWANSEA GAS WORKS. When were the first gasworks opened in Swansea? Who owned them? Where were they situated? It is known to be between 1817 and 1822. A little time spent with the relevant issues of 'The Cambrian' would probably succeed in turning up the answer. Information to Dr. Graham Humphrys, Dept. of Geography, University College of Swansea.

3. STATIONARY STEAM ENGINES. Mr. Colin Bowden, of Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, has written to the Newsletter as follows: "I am attempting the (perhaps impossible) task of compiling a check list of stationary steam engines still existing on their original sites (either working, preserved or disused) with a view to possible publication later in the year, and wondered if you knew of a member of your society interested in engines who might be able and willing to help me." He also encloses a preliminary draft covering the whole of Wales. The only engines he knows of in the Swansea area are at Crynant and Llangennech:

Crynant Blaenant Colliery (SN785032).  
Horizontal duplex winder. Markham & Co. Ltd.,  
Chesterfield. 1907. Working.  
Ditto. Worsley Mesnes Ironworks Ltd., Wigan.  
1927. Working.

Llangennech Morlais Colliery (SN573023)  
Horizontal duplex winder. Barclay & Co.,  
Kilmarnock. 1907. Working.  
(Horizontal?) cross compound geared haulage engine  
Maker and date unknown? Working.

It seems very likely that there are other engines still in existence in our area. Would anyone who knows anything please get in touch with the Editor of the Newsletter who will co-ordinate all the information and pass it on to Mr. Bowden. This is a worth-while piece of co-operation between industrial archaeologists in different parts of the Kingdom, and the task

Mr. Bowden has set himself is a useful one which deserves our support. I hope everyone will try to supply some further information, preferably with all the details as in the above examples, but failing that, just to know of the existence of an engine would be a starting point.

4. SWANSEA CANAL. Approximately mid-way between Pontardawe and Ynysmeudwy on the Swansea Canal (SN 736053) a branch canal runs towards the river where there are extensive remains of wharves, locks, ruined buildings and bridge abutments (SN 737050). It seems as though coal was brought across the river, possibly from the mines at Cilybebyll and transferred to narrow boats at the head of the branch canal. If anyone has any information on this site, would they please get in touch with the Secretary who will pass it on to the enquirer, Mr. R.G. Keen of the National Museum.
5. TAPES AND FILMS. It would seem that a number of people in the district have films depicting obsolete industrial processes or tapes on which former industrial methods and conditions are described by old workers. Some of these are well known, such as the tinsplate film in Llanelli Borough Library, or the film of the last Mumbles Train in Swansea City Library. However there must be many more films and tapes made by private individuals and in their keeping. It would be a step towards a realistic appraisal of what records of our industrial history are available to us if a list of these films and tapes were to be compiled. May we therefore appeal to anyone with such a film or tape to let us know about it, giving details of subject, length and date when made. Doing this does not mean that you will be forever having to show the film, but it does mean that we will be able to supply a useful - perhaps unique - source of information to a serious student when the need arises.

#### NEWS ITEMS

Railway history. The Railway and Canal Historical Society is now making available to non-members the information contained in its card index of source material.

For several years it has been collecting details of source material in Great Britain and the card index gives the locations of Acts, Bills, prospectuses, reports, notices and rule books, maps, plans and other printed and manuscript documents.

For access to this information there is a charge to non-members of 5p per card, with a minimum charge of 20p, and a maximum of 75p.

An applicant should write (with a stamped addressed envelope) to the Research Records Officer, Mr. P.G. Rattenbury, 10 Orchard Crescent, Dinas Powis, Glamorganshire CF6 4JZ, giving the name of the railway or canal.

The reply will indicate if index entries are available and will state the fee for copies. On receipt of the fee, these copies will be made and forwarded to the recipient.

(Reprinted, with permission, from 'Liaison', published by the Library Association, November 1972.)

Excursion to Merthyr Tydfil. Swansea WEA Branch is planning an excursion (probably on a Saturday in May) to Merthyr Tydfil to visit early industrial sites and the town's museum. The visit will be preceded by a short course of lectures on the Industrial Revolution in South Wales to be given by Mr. Cledwyn Phillips, BA. Details will be available shortly from the local honorary secretary, Mrs. Esme Joyce, JP, 14 Lon-ger-y-Coed, Swansea, SA2 0YH. (Tel. 27318)

"Local History and Industrial Archaeology" is the title of a residential course to be held from August 20th to 25th at Padarn Hall and the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. The course is being arranged by University College Cardiff, and syllabuses should be available shortly from Mr. G.I. Lewis, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, Berwick House, Uplands Terrace, Swansea, SA2 0GU.

There are a number of other courses and summer schools being held at centres throughout the country on archaeology, IA and local history. The Secretary has a list of these which she would be pleased to make available to any member contemplating making one of these courses part of his/her holiday this year.

The Rev. Calvert Jones (1804-77). Calvert Jones was a Swansea artist who specialized in maritime subjects. From March 3rd to 24th an exhibition of his work will be held at the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, including 60 drawings by Jones as well as some of the work of other contemporary artists, all depicting maritime scenes in the Bristol Channel around Swansea. Besides being an artist, Jones was also a pioneer photographer, and the exhibition will include a number of these early photographs, many of them depicting shipping at Swansea.

Penydarren Tramroad Project. The South East Wales IA Society (of Cardiff) are undertaking an interesting project on the famous Penydarren Tramroad which runs from Merthyr down to Quakers' Yard. So far two meetings have been held: on Sunday 26 November a preliminary inspection took place, including the use of a metal detector to 'sweep' parts of the track for fragments of rail etc. On Sunday January 14 another visit was planned, one party to explore the northern part of the line, including the Plymouth Ironworks Tunnel, while another group was to work near Pontygwaith on the southern part of the tramroad looking for rails and pieces of broken wheels from the wagons.

The Penydarren Tramroad - often referred to as the Merthyr Tramroad - was authorised by Act of Parliament of 1799 to carry iron from the works at Merthyr to the Glamorganshire Canal at

what was then known as Navigation (now Abercynon), thus by-passing a series of locks at Abercynon. The tramroad's chief claim to fame lies in the fact that in 1804 Richard Trevithick drove the first steam railway engine in the world along it - an unsuccessful experiment! the locomotive performed well, but the track was not strong enough to take the weight of a steam engine and broke in many places. Among the interesting remains to be seen still are the Plymouth Ironworks Tunnel and two elegant stone bridges over the River Taff near 'Quakers' Yard. The tramroad was eventually superseded by the Taff Vale Railway.

Further information on the project is available from Mr. W.G. Hughes, 96 Wenallt Road, Rhiwbina, Cardiff.

(N.B. The best account of the Penydarren Tramroad is still Stanley Mercer's article "Trevithick and the Merthyr Tramroad" in the 'Transactions of the Newcomen Society', vol.26, 1947-48, pp.89-103.)

#### LITERATURE

The last few months have not seen the publication of much material on the IA of our region. However the following are worth noting:

D. Morgan Rees continues his Welsh-language series in 'Y Gwyddonydd' (vol.10, pts. 2-4):  
Part 4, pp.65-71 Tua'r gorllewin (Westwards)  
Part 5, pp.118-125 Y canolbarth (The Midlands)  
Part 6, pp. 212-216 Gogledd Cymru (North Wales)

Each part describes, with excellent illustrations, the industrial remains to be found in a particular area. Swansea is included in part 4, with references to the Clayton Works at Pontardulais and Gurnos Tinplate Works.

Mr. Morgan Rees also has an article in 'Amgueddfa' (no.12, Winter 1972, pp.4-23) entitled 'THE METALLIFEROUS MINES OF WALES'. This is a well illustrated general survey, including passages on the Dolaucothi gold mines, lead mining near Rhandirmwyn, Carmarthenshir and in the Vale of Glamorgan and the Parys copper mine in Anglesey which fed the copper smelters of Swansea in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The bulk of the article is on the mines of North and Mid-Wales.

Douglas Hague, well known to many of our readers, contributes an article to the latest issue of 'Gower' (vol.23, 1972, pp.46-48) on 'WHITFORD POINT LIGHTHOUSE', in which he describes this lonely landmark off the north-west coast of Gower. The lighthouse, dating back to 1865, is constructed of cast iron plates bolted together, and although no longer in use is still in excellent condition.

An interesting little booklet that has just been printed is William Harry's 'SIXTY-SIX YEARS WITH TRACTION ENGINES'. Mr. Harry was born on Cilibion Farm in 1886 and describes his career as a traction-engine owner operating in Gower and in the country around Swansea. He gives a good idea of the numerous tasks that traction-engines performed - threshing, haulage, drainage, forest sawing and timber extraction. The booklet includes a number of very interesting photographs, as well as extracts from Mr. Harry's ledgers showing the work done in a typical season (1919/20). Enquiries should be addressed to: Mr. W. Harry, Llethryd Lodge, Llethryd, Swansea, SA2 7LH.

P.R.R.

Final note. This issue of the Newsletter is somewhat shorter than I would like it to be, but one cannot make bricks without straw. Please keep the information coming in to the editor. It is only in this way, by having the assistance of all our members, that a Newsletter can be produced that is of interest to members at the time of reading, and may perhaps have some historical value as well.

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Published for the Society by P.R. Reynolds, University College Library, Swansea, SA2 8PP.