

SOUTH WEST WALES INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

CYLCHLYTHYR

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

FUTURE MEETINGS

The programme of meetings held in association with the Extra-Mural Department of the University College starts again in October. The meetings up to Christmas are as follows:

Thursday, October 18th. "The coal-mining industry of south-west Wales"; by W. Gerwyn Thomas.

Dr. Thomas, a native of Ammanford, is a graduate of Cardiff University College and took his doctor's degree at Birmingham University. He is at present Assistant Keeper in the Department of Industry at the National Museum of Wales. His previous posts have been Assistant Colliery Manager with the NCB and Senior Lecturer at Birmingham University. He is a fellow of the Institute of Mining Engineers and has published articles on coal-mining in Glamorgan Historian, vol. vi (1969) and in Amgueddfa (1969) and his book on the history of coal mining in South Wales is shortly to be published by the National Museum.

Thursday November 15th. "Brunel and the railway that never was"; by Roger Worsley.

Mr. Worsley, who lives in Pembrokeshire, specialises in scientific and archeological photography, and has taken part in IA projects. He made the material at the Dinorwic Slate Quarry exhibition for the National Museum, and the film Coalface 1900 now touring Britain. The railway he will talk about, is one planned, but never built, across West Wales to Milford Haven. He will use tape-recordings, slides and large-scale maps to illustrate his lecture.

Thursday December 20th. "The early iron industry in south-west Wales"; by M. C. S. Evans.

Mr. Evans, a graduate of the University of Wales, is a schoolmaster at Lampeter. He is a member of this society, and also an active member of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society. He is at present Hon. Treasurer of that society, and was Hon. Secretary from 1968 to 1972, and serves on a number of the society's sub-committees. He has published several articles on the history of Carmarthen and the Carmarthenshire iron industry in Carmarthenshire Antiquary and Carmarthenshire Historian. His latest work, 'The iron industry at Llechryd' is to be published in the collection Carmarthenshire Studies due for publication in 1974.

All these meetings are to be held in the Royal Institution at 7 p.m. The usual circulars will be sent out in due course. The Society would like to put on record its appreciation of the work done by Mr. G. I. Lewis of the Extra-Mural Department in arranging these lectures.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

During the summer two field days were held. On June 30th, 11 members assembled outside the Ynysmudw Arms near Pontardawe and proceeded to visit the site of the Ynysmeudwy pottery under the leadership of Mr. Derek Harper. Mr. Harper's notes are reprinted elsewhere in this Newsletter. Fragments of Ynysmeudwy brick and pottery were found, but the most obvious remains is the derelict shell of the Bryn Timplat Works which occupied the site after the closure of the pottery. The party then walked a little way down the Swansea Canal to inspect the dried-up course of a short branch canal, the wharves by the River Tawe from where it started and the abutments of a tramroad bridge over the river from collieries at Cwm-Nant-Llwyd and Waun-y-Coed.

The second field day was held on July 28th when 16 members and friends visited Kidwelly Timplat Works and were conducted round the extensive remains by Mr W.H.Morris. It was evident that the owners, Messrs Zanmit of Llanelli, had recently carried out repairs to the roof to give some measure of protection to the wealth of machinery and equipment still to be found in the works. After tea at the nearby Gwenllian Court Hotel the party proceeded by car to a spot near Pembrey from where it is possible to see four abandoned canals, viz. Kymer's Canal, the Earl of Ashburnham's Canal, the Pembrey Canal and the Kidwelly & Llanelli Canal (later the Burry Port & Gwendraeth Valley Railway and still in use as a railway: its origin as a canal is betrayed by the waterlogged condition that the track often acquires.) Mr. Morris pointed out these canals and spoke briefly on their history: a short walk was then taken along the heavily overgrown banks of the Ashburnham Canal.

On both these occasions we were fortunate in having excellent weather. We are most grateful to our two leaders, Messrs Harper and Morris, whose guidance contributed greatly to the success of these two field days.

NEWS ITEMS

Scott's Pit, Llansamlet. The Ancient Monuments Board for Wales published their annual report for 1972 on July 16 last. The appendix to the report lists 32 monumen-s which the Board recommends the Welsh Office to schedule for preservation, and one of these is Scott's Pit Engine House (map ref. SS 697983), one of the few surviving beam engine houses on the Cornish pattern in South Wales.

The history of the pit is not well documented and there is room for differing views, but in outline it would seem to be as follows. It was sunk in 1770 by a Captain John Scott, but because of drainage difficulties work was abandoned before the pit became operational. At some later stage, perhaps in the 1810's the Cornish pump and winding engine were installed, thus solving the drainage difficulties and enabling the pit to be worked. Scott sold it to Charles Smith of Gwernllwynchwyth in 1819 who worked the 4-foot seam until 1838. It has been suggested - and probably rightly - that there were two John Scotts, the first who sank the pit, the second who installed the beam engine and sold the pit to Smith. Little information has been preserved about either of them: the elder is known to have built a tramroad from Llansamlet to Foxhole; and the younger, like many other capitalists who developed the coalfield, lived in London.

He took out a lease from Smith in 1816 to work the coal under Gwernllwynchwytth and traded as Scott & Co. and as the Old Church Colliery Co. Perhaps it is to this period that the Cornish engine should be dated. The company's finances never seem to have been sound, due no doubt to the geological difficulties in the area.

H.M.S. Warrior.

Britain's first ironclad battleship, launched at Blackwall in 1860, now lies derelict at Pembroke Dock as an Admiralty jetty. She was designed not so much as a ship, but rather as a floating battery carrying 40 of the heaviest guns available at the time, and represents a major breakthrough in naval design. Coal-fired boilers gave her a speed of 14 knots. For most of her active service she formed part of the Channel Fleet guarding Britain's southern shores. Although the cost has been estimated at £1½ - 2 million, it is the hope of the Swansea and West Wales branch of the World Ship Society to arouse sufficient interest to preserve H.M.S. Warrior and to convert her into a maritime museum like 'Cutty Sark' at Greenwich. The secretary of the branch, and a leading leading figure in the fight to preserve the ship, is a Swansea man Mr. Gareth Mills.

Trams

Members who find themselves in the Newport area might be interested to visit Oxford House at Risca where the local IA society have assembled a collection of six 19th century trams formerly in use in quarries, collieries and tinsplate works. They have all been rescued from the various places where they were discovered, and the society has often had to act fast in order to save newly found trams from scrap yards dealers. They are also trying to collect lengths of rail of a suitable type on which to exhibit the trams.

Another early 19th century tram on display is in the Entrance Hall of the National Museum at Cardiff. This was found, with its load of coal intact, in a caved-in working at Blaina which was recently re-discovered. Also found were the rails (of the tramplate variety, with the flanges on the rails, not on the wheels) and a length has been preserved on which the tram is mounted.

COPPER AND LEAD WORKS IN PENCLAWDD.

It is sad to find that a very handsome stone tablet set in the western wall of an old industrial building known as the Archways at Penclawdd (SS 54639585) is now completely covered by thick ivy. The inscription on the stone was - and, it may be hoped, still is - 'LPC Co. Rebuilt 1848'. This stone plaque was attractively designed with shell and leaf motifs at its corners, and the name 'Evan John, Agent' in small letters at the bottom. The initials stood for 'Lowe's Patent Copper Co.' Evan John was presumably the person of that name who managed the Broad Oak Colliery, Casllwchwr (Loughor) in 1833 - 4, who around the same time appears to have been involved in the Loughor Zinc Works, and also in a small zinc smelter at Llansamlet in 1835 - 40. Incorporated in an inner wall of the building at Penclawdd was - and, presumably, still is - a long stone bearing the word 'Office'. The building fairly recently has been cleared and roofed and a wooden door has been placed in the wide arched doorway of the western ivy-clad wall. The writer fortunately has four photographs of the building and the inscribed stones as they were in the middle 1960's. Copies have been kindly made by Mr. H. Holloway for the Society's archives.

It is interesting to try to relate the position of the building bearing the inscription to a photograph of Penclawdd said to be dated circa 1900 (copies of which were being sold a few years ago by Mr. W. S. Francis, The Pharmacy, Penclawdd). The photograph shows a group of buildings and stacks of works (for tinsplate manufacture) in the area of the present cockle - processing plant : some remains of this establishment still stand, with corner - blocks of solidified slag. Also shown is a group of industrial buildings (with one very tall stack) - those of the lead and silver works - inland from the other site. A row of houses - reputedly 'barracks' for the metal workers - stood between the lead and silver works and the railway line and station buildings. Some remains of the late nineteenth century lead works are to be seen as parts of boundary walls on the site : these may also partly be the remains of earlier copper works. The building with the inscribed stones which belonged to Lowe's Copper Co. is on the north - western edge of the area of the later lead works.

In the Herald of Wales of 21 January 1922, there was a reproduction (for a copy of which I am indebted to Dr. F. C. Cowley) of a pencil sketch entitled 'The ruined lead and steel works, Penclawdd'. The sketch, in fact, seems mainly to depict the tinsplate works. Maps kindly made available by Mr. Bernard Morris and Mr. W. Idris Roberts show that the four-mill tinsplate works of the Gower Iron & Tinsplate Co. Ltd. around 1890 - dismantled in 1897 (c.f. E.H.Brooks, Chronology, p. 148) was located at the eastern end of the lead works area at about SS 5475983, being the site of the present timber yard.

The chronology of the non-ferrous metal smelting works at Penclawdd is as follows:

<u>METAL(S) PRODUCED.</u>	<u>FIRMS</u>	<u>DATES</u>
Copper	Stanley Co.	? - 1788 - 1792
Copper (? and lead)	Cheadle Brasswire Co.	1792 - 1800
Copper and lead	Cheadle Brasswire Co. and John Vivian	1800 - 1811 -
Copper	Lowe, Hunt and Co. (alias Lowe's Patent Copper Co.)	1848 - 1852 (? - 1858)
Copper	Penclawdd Copper Co.	1864 - 1868
Lead and silver	Stock and Co.	ca 1870
Lead and silver	Goodhart and Co.	(?1878) - 1880 - 1884 - ?

On the story of the earliest (pre - 1792) intended and actual smelting enterprises at Penclawdd see the journal Gower, vol 5 (1952), 13 - 14 and volume 14 (1961), 35 - 43; cf. also Gower, volume 10 (1957), 35, 37. Mr. Robert Toomey, a research student in the Economic History Department of the University College of Swansea, has recently investigated John Vivian's involvement in the Penclawdd works.

Very little attention seems to have been given to the history of the Penclawdd smelting works of the mid and late nineteenth century. There is a plan of the copper works dated around 1840 in the Glamorgan Record office (D/DP8 - Penrice Estate Maps). On 7 January, 1850, Evan John as manager of the copper works gave a dinner to about 100 workmen - Some probably engaged in coalmining and other occupations. Charles Low was cashier and manager of the copper works in 1851 and he was also a partner in the Bishopston Silver and Lead Mining Co. (Bank of England Letter Book III, Swansea to London, 28 January 1851).

(Interesting statements about the industrial history of Penclawdd in the late nineteenth century may be found in a letter in the South Wales Evening Post, 7 July 1947 and earlier correspondence in Gower, volume 17 (1966), 47 - 49 and in W. E. Minchinton, The British Tinplate Industry (Oxford, 1957), pp 57, 75, 110, 113, 117.) Documentary and published evidence about the non-ferrous metal works, however, appear to be sparse; but they may be enough to challenge some local historian. The visible remains, as already indicated, have largely disappeared; and it is therefore especially to be hoped that the plaque is still in a state that would justify an attempt to secure its preservations.

R.O.Roberts.

BRIEF NOTES ON THE YNYSMEUDWY POTTERY.

The pottery was situated at Ynysmeudwy on a site between the Swansea Canal and the River Tawe which later became the Bryn Tinplate Works. It was in operation for only about 30 years from 1844 to 1870+.

1844 - 1854	William & Charles Williams, Manufacturers of fire brick, house brick, tiles, terra cotta and chimney pots.
1854 - 1860	William Williams. Domestic earthenwares, bricks, tiles, etc.
1860 - 1870	G. Lewis & Morgan, Earthenware, bricks, tiles etc.
1870 -	W.T.Holland Bricks, tiles etc.

The factory's output during the years between 1854 & 1860, when the good quality earthenware was produced, consisted mainly of transfer printed tea, dinner services, toilet sets, etc. Some hand painted ware consisted of simple flower and leaf decoration was also produced.

The transfer patterns known to have been used were the popular Willow pattern, ~~King~~, Woodbine, Alambra, Alma, Livinium, Oriental Birds, Abbey and Eastern. Children's plates with Red Riding Hood scenes, Hunting and Rural scenes were also produced.

Kitchen ware such as stew pans, casseroles, basins, jugs etc., decorated with coloured slip bands; vases and jugs of moulded design containing figures of people, flowers and fruit; public house beer mugs of $\frac{1}{2}$ pint, 1 pint and quart sizes decorated with coloured slip bands and the tree-like Mocha design are also known to have been made, but as yet no complete example of these wares have been found.

When the production of the fine earthenware ceased some of the copper plates and other machinery were sold to the South Wales Pottery at Llanelli, who continued to produce pottery until the 1920's. It has recently been established that the Cambrian Pottery (D.J. Evans & Co.) also purchased at least one set of copper plates i.e. the Woodbine pattern.

D. G. Harper.

LITERATURE

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: by Brian Barcegirde and others. (London, Heinmann, 1973. £6.50.) The great strength of this book lies in the large number of good photographs with informative captions. The old favourites make new appearances of course (e.g. The Iron Bridge, Telford's Holyhead Road and its bridges, Pont Cysyllte aqueduct and others) but most of the photographs are of sites that have not been over-exposed, or are at least new angles on better-known remains. The ten chapters of text are each the work of a distinguished author who is a specialist in his particular subject, but it is unfortunate that restrictions of space allow only a very brief account to be given of a few selected topics. For instance, the coal, gas and oil industries are all treated in 17 pages of which 7 are illustrations with their accompanying captions. The non-ferrous smelting industries or the tinsplate trade, so important in the Swansea region, are not described at all. South Wales is not well represented: the only sites mentioned are the Penydarren Tramroad (2 plates and captions) a tramroad bridge at Aberdare (illustration and caption), and a drift mine at Ystalyfera (2 plates and caption). At £6.50 this must be a book to be bought only by the most affluent or enthusiastic; but anyone can order it through their local library, and despite its shortcomings will find it well worth their trouble to do so.

BROAD GAUGE ON THE SWANSEA VALE RAILWAY; by J.B. Sands (Jnl. of the Railway and Canal Historical Society, 19, 2, 1973. pp. 29-26.) This article traces the involved history of early schemes to build a railway up the Swansea Valley and describes relations between the Swansea Vale Railway and the South Wales Railway in the 1850's. The story is taken up to 1874 when the SVR was leased to the Midland Railway. A useful contribution to the story of one of our local railways whose full history has yet to be written.

In the first issue of this newsletter (June 1972) we referred to Dr. Arthur Raistrick's INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY: AN HISTORICAL SURVEY, a useful introduction to the subject. Originally published hardbound at £5.50, it is now to be re-issued by Granada Publishing Ltd. as a paperback in November of this year at 75p, a price which should put it within the reach of most members of this society.

P. R. R.

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