

No.8: November 1974

Editorial Committee: F.G.Cowley, P.R.Raynolds, W.I.Roberts.

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FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

A remainder of our two remaining lectures to be held before Christmas, both of which will be given in the Royal Institution:

Thursday 21 November at 7.00 p.m.

'The Welsh process of copper smelting'

Mr D.W.Hopkins, M.Sc. (University College of Swansea)

Friday 13 December at 7.00 p.m.

'Canals of South Wales'

Mr R.G.Keen (National Museum of Wales)

N.B. Please note that this meeting is to be on a Friday, and not our usual day for meetings, a Thursday.

The Extra-Mural Department of the University College has arranged a short series of lectures to be held in Neath during November to mark the publication of the second edition of 'Neath and district: a symposium' edited by Elis Jenkins. The five speakers are all contributors to this volume, and they and their subjects are as follows:

Monday 18 November. T.R.Owen: The geology and scenery of Neath and the Neath Valley.

Tuesday 19 November. Professor Glanmor Williams: The change from medieval to modern Neath.

Wednesday 20 November. D.Morgan Jones: Neath and district: industrial archaeology.

Thursday 21 November. Robert Thomas: The changing pattern of transport in Neath and district.

Friday 22 November. Professor Harold Carter: Urban development.

All the lectures will be given in the Castle Hotel, Neath, starting at 7.00 p.m. Admission to individual lectures is 15p each, or 60p for the entire series. Tickets may be purchased at the door subject to seats being available, or they may be obtained in advance from The Director, Dept.of Extra-Mural Studies, Berwick House, Uplands Terrace, Swansea. SA2 0GU.

The Society would like to take this opportunity of offering their warm congratulations to Mr Elis Jenkins on the undoubted success of his book which is shown not least in the need to issue a re-impression so soon after the original publication.

LOUGHOR ZINC WORKS

The Ancient Monuments Board for Wales issued their 20th annual report last July, covering the work of the Board for 1973. The appendix lists 25 monuments recommended for scheduling during the year, and among these it is very gratifying to see the name of Loughor Zinc Works. The significance of this site is that it is a rare, and perhaps unique example of a building designed for smelting according to the English method (or a variant of it), dating from the early 19th century.

Two other monuments that have also been recommended for scheduling and that are likely to be known by some of our readers are Sirhowy Ironworks, Tredegar, and the flight of 14 locks on the Monmouthshire Canal at Rogerstone, a familiar sight to travellers on the M4 motorway near Newport.

MARITIME AND INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM, SOUTH DOCK, SWANSEA

Some months ago I placed a scheme before the Swansea City Council for the setting up of a Maritime and Industrial Museum in the Coastlines Warehouse and Liverpool Wharf in the South Dock. The proposition fitted in well with the leisure and amenity programme envisaged by the City Council and has received their approval.

As many readers may know, it is proposed to build a leisure centre on the old Victoria Station site, and to combine the South Dock and tidal basin into a marine and water sports facility. The remainder of the area is to be developed into parklands with walks and clear access to the sea shore

The Maritime and Industrial Museum would provide another amenity in this area which is now due for rapid development. The City Council has embarked on a programme of rehabilitation of the building and its surroundings together with certain reconstruction for museum purposes, and I am presently actively engaged in the collection of exhibits to illustrate the maritime and industrial history of the region.

So far we have acquired the Abbey Woollen Mill, Neath, complete, and this has been shipped to the Museum and is being set up as a working exhibit in full production. In the meantime we have been seeking the co-operation of other organizations who wish to join with us in the development of this project and have already received commitments from a number of sources of quite magnificent exhibits. We are also negotiating for the acquisition of various vessels of interest to this district for inclusion in the Museum. At the present a number of organizations have already agreed to co-operate with us in either loaning or providing exhibits. This includes the National Coal Board with whom we are discussing the setting up of a full scale artificial road-way and coal-face with the most modern mining equipment. The Institution of Post Office Electrical Engineers in association with the Post Office have agreed to set up the National Telecommunications Museum in our building. The Clwb Rheil Cymru have agreed to the loan of their three locomotives. The Welsh Historic Vehicle Trust have agreed to loan a number of their vehicles which have local connections, and we have the full co-operation of the National Maritime Trust.

We have already received the offer of a large number of exhibits in both the maritime and agricultural fields, and are constantly on the look out for further exhibits.

It is planned that the new complex should open in stages from 1976/77 and professional and other staff will be appointed with each phase. It is most important that this project should receive as much help and assistance as possible from those amateurs and professionals who are knowledgeable in the field of industry and industrial archaeology.

We would seek to co-operate to the full with members of your society who can provide an invaluable service in the location, recording and reporting on items worthy of inclusion in the Museum, or which require preservation or attention within the Swansea district. I hope that members will feel that this is a worth while project in an area rich in industrial history and archaeology which has for so long been neglected.

J.S. Bunt.
(Curator, Glynn Vivian Gallery)

THE NEATH AND TENNANT CANALS PRESERVATION SOCIETY (N & T)

Since its formation in August 1974, the society has rapidly grown to a membership of just under one hundred. Although only in the embryo stage, the N & T has proceeded with great gusto to formulate its aims, policies and aspirations.

Public and Committee meetings are held regularly in the Castle Hotel, Neath, thus forging an historical link with the formation of the Neath Canal Company in 1799 in the 'Ship and Castle' as it was then named.

Due to the inevitable depreciation and dereliction of the original 24 miles of navigable waterways, the Society's primary aim is to assist actively in the preservation of the remaining canal stretches. Delay or hesitation may well result in the loss of the upper reaches of the Neath Canal through the proposed Neath-Abergavenny Trunk Road project. Similarly the Neath and Tennant Junction at Aberdulais may well be destroyed should the renowned aqueduct be removed.

Paradoxically the N & T's secondary aims must be achieved first if a navigable canal system is to be realised. Not least of these aims is that of promoting public awareness of the recreational and environmental potentials of the waterways. Large amounts of money, favourable publicity, volunteer labour, professional expertise are essential for such a project, and already the N & T has appointed officers responsible for these aspects of their plans.

If re-opened the Neath and Tennant system would provide some twenty miles of safe inland water for boating, angling, camping, nature study, walking, and industrial archaeology. The proposed restoration scheme would allow for participation by many sections of the community, as well as bringing social, environmental and educational benefits that would accrue from the improvement of an area best described in Alexander Cordell's "Song of the earth".

The society passionately believes that liaison with other societies would be mutually beneficial and that public involvement with the improvement of the environment would promote general goodwill within the area. Links have already been forged with some societies in the area, and the concept of a Technical Support Register has been discussed. Ideally such a register would comprise all types of expertise, either given freely or at nominal rates, to be pooled by societies in the South Wales area.

The N & T has already approached the Sports Council for Wales, Swansea City Council's "Heritage Year Scheme", the Welsh National Water Authority and the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales for assistance. Similarly the society would welcome contact from other societies and from persons with ideas, historical, material, etc.

On the practical side, work has already started on clearing parts of the Tennant Canal. On September 29 forty volunteers made spectacular progress on clearing away vegetation and soil from the Aberdulais Basin and work has continued on subsequent occasions. Discoveries made there include five old barges and a dock on the railway side of the canal, the walls of which have been partially excavated. Approaches have been made for permission to start clearing part of the Neath Canal as well, and while these were received favourably by the Canal Manager, commencement has had to be delayed until the Canal Committee hold their next meeting.

P.E. Corles
(Liaison Officer, N & T Society)

(Further information on the N & T and its activities is available from Mr Corles, 102, Pen-y-Fro, Dunvant, Swansea. Telephone: 21143.)

SWWIAS PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

One of the more important functions undertaken by the Society is the compilation and maintenance of a photographic record of sites of interest in our district. Mr H.Holloway has been responsible for this for well over two years and has now built up a sizeable collection of monochrome prints and colour transparencies. To give a complete list of these would over-burden the Newsletter, but the collection has now grown to the point where at least a summary catalogue ought to be published. Members are reminded that they may obtain copies of any of the photographs or slides at a modest charge, and that Mr Holloway is always willing to show the collection to interested members at any reasonable time. He may be contacted either c/o The Library, University College of Swansea or at his home number, Gowerton 872312.

Monochrome prints

Elba Steel Works, Gowerton (now demolished)

- 15 photographs covering the whole area extensively
- 3 photographs showing the demolition of the steam engine

Bryn Tinplate Works, Ynysmudw

- 10 photographs showing general points of interest including the attractive plaque set high up in the gable end of the building
- 1 group photograph

Scott's Pit, Llansamlet

- 2 photographs - general views

Yniscedwyn Iron Works, Ystradgynlais

- 6 photographs - general views

Loughor Zinc Works

- 12 photographs, showing general views, underground tunnels and airways
- 8 photographs of the underground workings, 10' x 8"

Morris Castle, Landore

- 5 photographs - general views

Miscellaneous sites in South Wales

- Morfa Bridge, Landore
- St Fagans Folk Museum (Aberystwyth south gate toll list)
- Old isolation hospital, Gwrhyd Mountain, Pontardawe
- Laugharne Castle renovation
- Oxford House, Risca, iron coal tram
- Copper works, Swansea, brick works and date
- Penclawdd Copper Works, walls and dated plaque
- Saundersfoot Railway, set of 12 prints showing railway in use, c.1930.
- Cwmafan Copper Works, Pelton wheel, 19th century photograph recently copied

Coalbrookdale and Ironbridge

- 19 photographs of various items of interest
- 1 group photograph

Colour transparencies

Scott's Pit, Llansamlet - 3 slides

Kidwelly Tinplate Works - 15 slides

Elba Steel Works, Gowerton - 26 slides

Loughor Zinc Works - 25 slides

Dolaucothi gold mines - 11 slides

Neath Canal - 8 slides

Field day to Abercrave and Aberdulais, May 1974 - 24 slides and group photograph

Bryn Tinplate Works, Ynysmudw - 26 slides

The national Photographic Record hold details in their files at Darlington of as many photographic collections as possible. These records are to be used as the basis of a Directory of British photographic collections which is to be published shortly by the Royal Photographic Society. The immediate use of the Directory will be by all manner of publishers, newspapers, magazines, educational institutions, students and researchers. It will also form an archive for use in future historical research. Mr Holloway has sent full details of our collection to the N.P.R. and we look forward to seeing an entry in the Directory in due course for the SWWIAS. We hope that this will prove to be the means of putting our collection to even wider use than it enjoys at present.

"MARGARET" ON THE MOVE AGAIN

The 96-year old saddle tank engine "Margaret" languished for many years in a shed at Kidwelly Tinsplate Works. She saw the light of day once again on 23 June last when she was brought out to be taken by low-loader lorry to the Scolton Country Museum near Havcrfordwest. Pembrokeshire County Museum, who also run the Scolton Museum bought her from her former owners, the Llanelli engineering firm of J. & P. Zammit, now in liquidation, for £640, and spent nearly as much again on the four-hour journey by road to her new home. It is intended that eventually she will be on permanent display there.

"Margaret" has had a long and varied career. Built by Fox, Walker in 1878 for the North Pembrokeshire and Fishguard Railway, she was probably named after the wife of Edward Cropper, M.P. who built the N.P. & F.R. When the railway was acquired by the G.W.R. in 1898 "Margaret" became G.W.R. no. 1378, but continued to work the North Pembrokeshire line. In July 1910 the G.W.R. sold her to the tiny Gwendraeth Valleys Railway at Kidwelly (only 2½ miles long, and not to be confused with the Burry Port & Gwendraeth Valley Railway: that was a much bigger concern, 21 miles long). She was then re-numbered 2. Twelve and a half years later in January 1923 "Margaret" passed once again into the Great Western fold at the time of the railway grouping, but she did not remain there long enough to be renumbered. The G.V.R. had already negotiated her sale to Kidwelly Tinsplate Works, and she was handed over to her new owners in March 1923. "Margaret" continued to work at the tinsplate works until they closed in 1941 on being requisitioned by the Board of Trade for war purposes. After the war the works were dismantled, and the site and plant, including "Margaret", were sold to the Zammit brothers. "Margaret" remained in a shed from then onwards despite longing eyes cast on her by preservationists. At some time in recent years she lost her fine name- and number-plates, but otherwise is undamaged. Her return to the county that was her first home is a result of Zammit's bankruptcy in 1973 and the consequent sale of Kidwelly Tinsplate Works and all the plant there, which includes two fine stationary steam engines.

P.R.R.

A TRAMROAD AT CWMLLYNFELL IN THE 1820s

"Fourteen miles north of Swansea up the canal lies the Cwrnlllyn (sic) Fell Colliery. A tramroad 3 miles long, which is not very well maintained, leads from the canal to the colliery. On this run wagons holding somewhat more than 1 ton, and two of these are drawn by one horse. The wheels of these wagons are of cast-iron 18 in. high, provided with 12 spokes. The naves are 6 1/4 in. long. These wheels are exceptionally narrow, only 1/8 in. wide at the circumference, but this is usual on the tramroads of this district. They are movable on the axles, while the axles, which are of wrought-iron, also turn in their bearings."

The above passage is quoted from Railways in England, 1826 and 1827 by C. von Geynhausen and H. von Dechen. The authors were German engineers sent over by the Prussian government to report on the development of railways and tramroads in Britain. An English translation of their report was published by the Newcomen Society in 1971.

RECENT LITERATURE

Recent issues of periodicals have not contained any material specifically on our district, but the following items of a more general nature are deserving of attention: Dr R.A. Buchanan of the University of Bath has recently completed a series of articles in the New Scientist under the general title of INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE. The first of these articles to appear was in the issue for 14 March 1974 and described Arkwright's mill at Cromford in Derbyshire, and since then further articles have appeared describing the following sites: Bonawe ironworks in Scotland (28 March), Mendip lead mines (11 April), Shardlow inland port near Derby (25 April), Lord Montagu of Beaulieu's motor museum (9 May), Laxey water wheel in the Isle of Man (23 May), Dinorwic slate quarries (6 June), British glass (4 July), Disappearing docks (18 July), and finally Victorian piers (1 August). This series was a sequel to a similar series that appeared in the New Scientist during 1973.

Few readers will need to be told of the publication recently of SWANSEA OLD AND NEW by Derek G. Bowden and Norman L. Thomas. (Wakefield, EP Publishing, £1-95.) The book is a collection of photographs and drawings of Swansea, on one side of a double opening a scene from Swansea as it was in the past, and on the opposite side a photograph taken as far as possible from the identical spot in 1974. A lot of the views are of street scenes, but industry is represented in the form of views of the docks, railway scenes, the Cambrian Pottery, the Swansea Canal and the Dyffryn Works at Morriston. Devotees of trams and other outmoded forms of transport will find a good deal to interest them and there are also several views of pre-war cinemas, a subject that has its passionate enthusiasts. Perhaps there might have been more views of copper and tinplate works, but the modern counterpart in all too many cases would have been a photograph of waste land which would hardly have made an attractive contribution to the book.

By way of advance notice, the fourth volume of the monumental GLAMORGAN COUNTY HISTORY, edited by Professor Glanmor Williams is to be published during November. This volume, covering early modern Glamorgan (16th-18th centuries) is likely to prove as much a definitive work for its period as the earlier volume on medieval Glamorgan. Most of the chapters are concerned with political, social, or ecclesiastical history, but there are chapters on the economic history of the period by Professor Glanmor Williams and Dr M.I. Williams which will include material on the early industries of the county.

Finally an article on a most recherché topic by a local scholar: ANCIENT CLAY FURNACE BARS FROM IRAN, by Dr J.W. Barnes who is a Lecturer in Geology at Swansea University College, is published in the Bulletin of the Historical Metallurgy Group, vol.7, no.2, 1973, pp.8-17. The article describes a deposit of these bars found at Kushk in Iran and gives the results of the scientific tests to which they were subjected in an attempt to determine the use for which they were intended.

P.R.R.