

No.9: March 1975.

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

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#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held in the Royal Institution of South Wales, Swansea, at 7.00 p.m. on Thursday March 20th. The usual business will be transacted, following which Mr A.J.Y.Richards, one of our members, will show a selection of slides on tramroads in South Wales and talk briefly on the subject.

Please note that in order to save postage this is the only notice that will be given. Copies of the agenda are enclosed with this Newsletter. Members should send nominations for the various officers and committee posts to the Hon. Secretary, Mr W.I.Roberts, 2 Gloucester Place, Mumbles, Swansea, to reach him by March 15th. Members are also requested to give the Secretary notice of any matters they may wish to raise under the final item on the agenda by that date also.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

A number of members have already paid their subs. for 1975, and to them we say an appreciative Thankyou. Other members are reminded that subscriptions are now due and should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer. The rates are still £1.00 p.a. for standard membership, and 50p p.a. for full-time students and senior citizens. A form is enclosed which you may care to use.

#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Thursday 20 March. AGM - see first paragraph above.

Thursday 17 April. Mr Geraint Jenkins (Welsh Folk Museum):  
"The fishing industry of south and west Wales".

Both the above meetings will be held in the Royal Institution and will start at 7.00 p.m.

Friday 16 and  
Saturday 17 May. Mr Bernard Morris (Assistant City Estate Agent, Swansea  
City Council):  
"Industrial housing in Swansea and district".

This will be the usual Spring 2-day event. Mr Morris will lecture on the Friday evening and Saturday morning, and on the Saturday afternoon a visit will be made by coach to some interesting examples of industrial housing in the Swansea area. Further details will be sent out in due course when the arrangements have been finalised.

## FUTURE COURSES AND CONFERENCES

Harlech. We are sending out with this Newsletter the Summer School programme of Coleg Harlech, mainly for the sake of the IA interest in the "North Wales Scene" course during August.

Worcester. The 6th Annual Conference of the Western IA Societies is to be held at Worcester this year on Saturday April 5th. A number of lectures have been arranged on IA in Worcestershire and the Severn Valley and on nail-making in the Black Country. The meeting starts at 9.30 a.m. and is scheduled to last all day, with a continuation on the Sunday morning for those who are able to stay overnight. The Sunday morning programme is a visit to a 17th century iron furnace (if dry), or to Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn (if wet). Also included by way of an appetiser is an evening of films on the preceding Friday evening; and on the Saturday evening a visit has been arranged to the museum of the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works. The conference will take place in Worcester College of Education, and overnight accommodation can be arranged in one of the halls of residence for those who require it.

Further details from Paul Reynolds, 12 Beaconsfield Way, Sketty, Swansea.

## OUR CONTEMPORARIES

We are happy to acknowledge the receipt of the Newsletter of the Neath & Tennant Canals Preservation Society, and the Bulletin of the Exeter Industrial Archaeology Group.

## REDEVELOPMENT OF THE LOWER SWANSEA VALLEY

As Mr R.O. Roberts explained at our January meeting, Mr Barry Fagg of the City Planning Department who is currently engaged on this immense project has invited the Society to comment on any industrial relics or historic buildings in this area which are considered worthy of preservation.

A group of members accompanied Mr Fagg on a walk through the area on February 15th, following the river from the Weaver building and the site of St Thomas station as far as the Morfa Bridge near the Addis Works. By this stage the party had split into two and the advance guard managed to reach Siemens' workshop and Landore viaduct. A number of relics were noted: Swansea Harbour Trust mooring bollards and several hulks near the New Cut bridge; Smith's Canal basin, still discernible, which has an interesting culvert carrying a stream over the canal and in its turn supporting an access road into White Rock Works; a stone on the canal bank near Addis Works marking the boundary between Upper and Middle Bank Works settled in 1829. This was photographed in situ since its removal for date's keeping seems imminent. Morfa Bridge, too, I understand, is to be preserved. Erected in 1908 it is an iron counterbalanced lifting bridge which allowed the passage of sailing boats up-river.

As a result of this walk it is hoped to produce a small brochure in collaboration with the City Council. It will take the form of an industrial archaeology trail through the valley pointing out surviving relics and the sites of the more important works that have now been destroyed.

W.J.R.

(Late note: Since the above was written a subsequent visit has been made to the valley by our photographer, Mr Hayden Holloway, and the Society now has black-and-white prints and colour slides of all the features of any significance still to be seen. Copies are of course available to members on the usual terms. At the time of writing this note the Upper/Middle Bank boundary post referred to above was scheduled for removal by the Army on Sunday 2 March for preservation in the Industrial and Maritime Museum. It is hoped that it will prove possible to put a replica in its place.)

## LOUGHOR ZINC WORKS

In our last issue we referred to the fact that Loughor Zinc Works had been recommended for scheduling as an ancient monument. We understand that the owners of the site have now withdrawn the objections to scheduling that they had made at the time, and therefore the recommendation made by the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales stands.

## YNISCEDWYN BOLLARD AT BRISTOL DOCKS

Visitors to the S.S. "Great Britain" now on display at Bristol should look out for a bollard made by the Yniscedwyn Iron Company. Mushroom-shaped and clearly inscribed YNISCEDWYN, the bollard is passed as one goes from the car park to the entrance to the ship. A similar bollard is to be seen in Swansea on the west bank of the New Cut a few yards up from the bridge.

## NEATH GENERAL STATION

On April 1st work is due to start on the rebuilding of Neath station. The existing buildings are to be demolished and replaced by new ones including all the usual amenities such as ticket office, travel centre, parcels office, and two buffets. New platform canopies are to be built and the existing footbridge which has long needed a support in the middle is to be replaced. It is perhaps the canopies with their cast-iron pillars that form the most attractive part of what is otherwise a very run-down station. No doubt the travelling public will appreciate the new station when it is completed: as the railhead for a wide area Neath deserves a better station than it has.

The new station will be Neath's fourth main-line station. The first one was opened in 1850 on the present site by the South Wales Railway. In 1865 the GWR moved the station down the line to where the London-Swansea and Vale of Neath lines cross. This was in order to facilitate interchange of passengers and goods between the two lines and to allow the two stations to be run as one. This second station proved unpopular because of its remoteness from the town centre, and in response to public opinion and because of the dangerous state of the platforms the GWR decided to build a new station on the original site.

Tenders were sought in an advertisement in The Cambrian for 6 March 1876 and the contract was let to a local builder, Joseph Rees. By 4 June of that year The Cambrian was able to report that work was well under way on building a "convenient and handsome station". At their half-yearly meeting on 2 September 1876 the GWR shareholders voted £20,000 for the work on the station, and in the following February it was announced that work would be completed and the new station open in May. No further reference appears in The Cambrian and it may be assumed that the station opened on time. Since then only minor modifications have been made, and the existing station is much as it was when Joseph Rees's men went away in 1877.

At the same time as the new station was built at Neath a new locomotive shed was erected at Gwrt Sart to be the principle depot for the repair of engines and rolling stock between Gloucester and Milford. In addition most of the principal stations on the South Wales main line were rebuilt during the 1870s, such as Newport, Cardiff, Landore, Swansea and Llanelli. For two of these, Swansea and Landore, the contractor was again Joseph Rees. With the conversion of the gauge in 1872 and so much rebuilding in the later years of the decade, the 1870s were clearly a time of major renewal on the South Wales main line.

P.R.R.

## BLAENANT COLLIERY

A £1½m. modernization scheme is in progress at Blaenant Colliery at Crynant in the Dulais Valley. This will entail the destruction of many of the existing surface buildings including the engine house and the steam winding engines. A 700-yard drift will be driven from the surface to join the existing workings and because of this the existing shafts will only be required for ventilation and emergency winding. Consequently the Coal Board intend to replace the steam engines with an electrically powered winder for emergency use only.

Mr Idris Hale, the well-known builder and proprietor of Pencynor Bird Gardens, is making efforts to have the engines preserved. He wants to see a committee set up to make representations to the MCB to save the engines. However so far the response from the Coal Board seems no more than luke-warm.

There are two engines at Crynant. They were originally installed to serve the old Cefn Coed Colliery whose workings run under Blaenant. The older one was built in 1907 by Markhams of Chesterfield; while the other dates from 1927 and is the work of Worsley Mesnes of Wigan. Apart from the one engine at the Morlais Colliery at Llangennech, these are the only ones still operating in the South Wales coalfield.

## ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

"COAL WINNING. Nearly two years since Mr David Bevan of Neath whose enterprising spirit has become proverbial commenced boring about a mile and a half on this side of Onllwyn station, near the Neath and Brecon Railway. Very great difficulties were presented in carrying out the work with the desired speed. Up to that time the country around was entirely barren, there were no dwellings for workmen or conveniences of any kind. This state of things, however, was soon remedied, houses were quickly erected and machinery of the best description brought into use, the dreary spot assuming a business-like aspect. Disappointments and delays were experienced to which less persevering persons would have succumbed. On one occasion the borer broke, and it has since been discovered only three feet from the much coveted seam. After sinking to the depth of 200 yards Mr Bevan's labours were last week rewarded by striking the nine-foot vein of coal, and the specimens already brought to the surface exceed the highest expectations as regards quality. For many years to come, therefore, this locality will be one of the busiest in the neighbourhood, as the supply of coal is, comparatively speaking, inexhaustible."

(The Cambrian, 19 Feb. 1875.)

## "FOR SALE

The fine barque "HAMPSHIRE", 533 tons built extra strong, for an Arctic voyage in search of Sir John Franklin, by Messrs. Money Wigram of London, in 1852, and classed thirteen years A 1; in 1865 she was continued nine years A 1, and thoroughly overhauled under the inspection of Lloyds; had new decks in 1870. Sails fast, and is now in Swansea (86 days' passage from Chili-Carrizal) with a cargo of copper regulus, in which trade she is wellknown for her regular and successful voyages without accident, never having to call upon her underwriters for a single claim. Carries a large cargo, is well found in spars, sails, and rigging, all having been from time to time renewed.

For inventories and further particulars apply to Captain E. H. Castle, 4 Bellowood-street, Swansea, or to Messrs. Tonge & Co., Commercial Court, 17 Water-street, Liverpool."

(The Cambrian, 5 March 1875.)

It is a pleasure to welcome this newly published and lavishly produced volume and to commend it to members of our Society and readers of this Newsletter. In this volume ten contributors under the general editorship of Professor Glanmor Williams (who has himself written four of the chapters) continue the history of the county from the Act of Union of 1536 to the eve of the Industrial Revolution. Well written, comprehensive and drawing much of its material from sources that were previously untapped, this volume and its companions are directed to the general reader interested in the history of his homeland as well as to the specialist historian and student.

Apart from the reference to the important and interesting coal mine near Llansamlet for which a unique set of accounts exists for the years 1366-67, vol.III of this history, dealing with the Middle Ages, had little to offer the industrial archaeologist in quest of evidences of mine, mill and furnace. Leaving aside the dearth of written evidence, conditions were not conducive in medieval times to the development of large-scale industries which would leave behind them material evidence. There was a plentiful supply of wood for fuel, a pitiful shortage of capital for investing in industrial enterprises and a demand for industrial products too small to make investment attractive. These factors combined to stifle industrial inventiveness and enterprise.

Conditions were gradually changing during the sixteenth century. As Glanmor Williams points out in Chapter I (The Economic Life of Glamorgan, 1536-1642), the pulse of industrial activity beat "perceptibly quicker and more robustly". The dwindling woodland, the expanding range of uses for coal, a growing accumulation of capital and the need for cannon brought into being an organized coal and iron industry which we now associate with the Industrial Revolution. Professor Williams illustrates his account of these heavy industries with a wealth of local examples. He has, too, a short, valuable account of the abortive copper-smelting undertaking at Aberdulais and a fine thumb-nail sketch of its German supervisor, Ulrich Frosse - "a somewhat melancholic, thin-skinned man and a born worrier" but "a capable and conscientious technician".

In his balanced chapter on 'The Economic and Social History of Glamorgan, 1660-1760' (Chapter VII), Dr Moelwyn I. Williams gives comprehensive coverage to the rural industries - spinning, weaving, tanning, knitting, soap-making - as well as to the mining and metallurgical industries which were soon to transform the economy of Glamorgan. He enables us to see all these industries in perspective against the still dominant agricultural background.

Only two chapters have been briefly singled out here because they are of immediate interest to our members. The volume will remain essential background reading for those of our members who are interested in the evidences for iron and coal industries in the early modern period. But there are many fine things in this absorbing book which will instruct and entertain the general reader. Volume V which takes the story into the period of the Industrial Revolution will be eagerly awaited.

F. G. C.

RECENT LITERATURE

Just published within the last few days is D.Morgan Rees's THE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY OF WALES (David & Charles, £6-50). In eight chapters he describes manufacturing, extractive, transport, and "other" industries, and lists the most important sites in a 40-page gazetteer. The work has come to hand too late to give it the detailed attention it deserves: it is hoped to publish a review at greater length in our next issue.

An exhibition of illustrations of the tinsplate industry was held last summer at Llanelli Borough Library, and a very attractive pamphlet was published to accompany it. TIN WORKERS by Tony Evans (Llanelli Borough Library, 30p.) describes in three sections the historical development of the tinsplate trade with special reference to Kidwelly; the working conditions in a typical handmill of the 19:0s; and the modern continuous cold-rolling plant at Trostre. It is most attractively produced, with text in an elegant calligraphic hand and a number of drawings and photographs. It is hoped to have copies on sale at our next meeting.

THE CANALS OF THE WELSH VALLEYS AND THEIR TRAMROADS; by D.D. and J.M.Gladwin (Oakwood pr., £3-00) is rather a disappointing book. The canals of South Wales have been well described by Charles Hadfield, but the definitive work on the tramroads has yet to be written, and unfortunately the position is not altered by the appearance of this book. The historical content adds little to Hadfield's "Canals of South Wales and the border" and Baxter's "Stone blocks and iron rails", although the notes on developments in the last few years are useful. Perhaps the best things in the book are the maps and the attractive line blocks in the text. One is disturbed at a number of misprints that should never have been allowed to remain in the text. Examples are Marfa for Morfa (p.30), Hen Neuwadd for Hen Neuadd (p.30), or Clayponds Tramroad for Claypons Tramroad (p.56).

The Neath & Tennant Canals Preservation Society continue to be a vigorous society doing a thoroughly worth-while job. The first issue of their quarterly magazine, THE AQUEDUCT, has recently been published under the editorship of Mr Alan George. It includes historical articles, personal reminiscences and reports of the Society's activities. A small number are available free of charge from Mr P.E.Corles, 11, Pen-y-Fro, Durrant, Swansea, but a charge will be made for future issues.

Finally, advance notice of two books due to be published later this year.

J.K.Major. Fieldwork in industrial archaeology. Batsford, £2-75. Due in May.

Kenneth Hudson. The archaeology of industry and transport. Bodley Head, £2-50.  
Due in September.

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