



SOUTH WEST WALES INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

CYLCHLYTHYR

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No. 15: July 1976

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

Price to non-members: 10p

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 28 August. 2.00 p.m.
Visit to Cwmavon, Pontrhydyfen and Afan Argoed
Leader: Mr Arthur Rees

A coach will leave College House (University College) at 2 p.m. to visit these sites in the lower Afan Valley. Passengers can also be picked up, if more convenient, in Plymouth Street, opposite the side entrance to the bus station (but not in the bus station itself) at about 2.10 p.m.

At Cwmavon we will see the traces of the iron and copper industry built up by the Governor and Company of Copper Mines in England, before going on to Pontrhydyfen (viaducts) and Afan Argoed Country Park for the recently opened Miners' Museum. It is proposed to have a picnic at Afan Argoed. Please bring your own provisions, but drinks should be available there.

If you're able to come on what promises to be an interesting and enjoyable afternoon, please fill in the enclosed form. The fare is 6pp each.

'MORRIS TOWN TRAIL'

The same team that brought you the Lower Swansea Valley IA Trail last year have now produced another, similar guide. This time the itinerary takes the reader through Morriston and up on to Graig Trewyddfa, past Morris Castle, and finishes at St Paul's Church, Landore. Thus, between them, these two guides cover the whole of the western side of the Lower Swansea Valley from the Royal Institution to Morriston Cross. As well as the obvious industrial monuments, the compilers have included notes on churches and chapels and on housing - essential parts of an industrial community. Unlike our earlier trail, this one takes the form of a leaflet rather than a booklet, but it includes six illustrations and two maps. SWWIAS are once again greatly in the debt of Dr Fred Cowley who has put in a great deal of work and gone to a lot of trouble in editing the guide.

In view of the Society's financial position we regret that it is just not realistic to present a free copy to each member as with the previous trail. However they are available at the very modest price of 10p each (plus postage, 6½p) from P.R. Reynolds, 12 Beaconsfield Way, Sketty, Swansea, SA2 9JR.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Thankyou to all those members who have already renewed their subscriptions for 1976. There are a few who still have to do so. If a cross appears in the margin beside this paragraph, that is to remind you that you are one of these. Please let the Treasurer (address above) have your cheque, cash or P.O. as soon as possible, otherwise we shall regretfully have to assume that you no longer wish to remain a member.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's 4th AGM was held in the Royal Institution on April 8th. Attendance was disappointing, a fact which later in the meeting led to a discussion on possible reasons for the reduced attendances at our meetings over the last twelve months even though membership has remained fairly constant. Postal charges now preclude the advertisement of individual events a few days in advance (as in past years) and we have to rely on the Newsletter and a programme published in advance.

Professor O'Neill, in his Presidential address, spoke of the valuable contribution which the Newsletter made in disseminating information, and of the Trails. The Society had provided the text and illustrations for these and they were something which should have further possibilities. The errors which crept into the pamphlets came in for criticism. In the case of the preliminary version of the Morriston trail, these were caused by the necessity to abridge the text originally prepared and to have it printed in a hurry for the Heritage Year Conference in January last. These errors have now been corrected in the definitive version now on sale.

The Treasurer's report revealed a small deficit over the past twelve months due to a general increase in costs and a slightly smaller paid-up membership than at this time last year. The committee had, since the warning sounded at the last AGM, considered an increased annual subscription and reluctantly recommended to the meeting that this should be raised to £1-50 p.a. with senior citizens and students paying 75p. The meeting agreed that this was reasonable and it will be put into effect next January.

Professor O'Neill announced his wish to retire from the office of President as, earlier in the year, had R.O. Roberts from the post of Chairman. Both had served in these capacities since the Society's reconstitution in 1971 and felt that a change of management would benefit the Society. We are pleased that they have both agreed to serve on the committee. Mr Alun Richards expressed the feeling of members in extending a vote of thanks to both for their invaluable efforts in setting the Society on its feet again.

Mr Alun Richards was then unanimously elected Chairman by the meeting. All the other serving officers and committee members were re-elected. It was agreed that the committee, after due consideration of suitable candidates, should be responsible for choosing a new President.

The evening concluded with a showing of 'Iron, lime and houses', a photographic record made during the Society's trips last year to Blaenavon, Penwyllt and housing in Swansea. This sequence, with a taped commentary, was prepared by Haylen Holloway and Paul Reynolds as our contribution to the Annual Conference of Western IA Societies held at Cardiff on April 3rd.

W.I.R.

'R.O.'

As you will have read, the AGM, with great reluctance, accepted the resignation of our chairman, Mr R.O. Roberts.

It was largely through his initiative that the Society was re-formed in 1971 since when he has, in spite of a prolonged bout of ill health and more than one period of serious personal difficulty, given an exceedingly active lead to our affairs. He has been engaged on research into the history of the copper-smelting industry and has published a number of articles on the subject. He has also researched the Lluchwr mine works which we hope will be published in due course. Despite this, he has given a great deal of his time to the Society, and our success is unquestionably due mainly to his efforts.

However I am happy to say that 'R.O.' has consented to remain as a member of the committee and so his scholarship and zeal are still at our service.

A. J. Y. Richards
Chairman.

OUR PAST PRESIDENT: AN APPRECIATION

When our Society was reconstituted in 1971 Professor Hugh O'Neill was an obvious person to ask to be President. He was a distinguished metallurgist with a wide knowledge of the history of the metal industries. He was a pioneer and practising industrial archaeologist before that term had gained wide currency. A graduate of Sheffield University, he was appointed Professor of Metallurgy at the University College of Swansea in 1947 and soon developed a keen interest in the metallurgical history of our region. At a time when the old metal industries were running down he was acutely aware, too, of the need to salvage and preserve some of the remaining machinery and equipment. It was largely through his efforts that local industrialists co-operated with the Royal Institution in 1955 to set up the Swansea Industrial Museum. He was elected President of the Royal Institution in 1963.

We are deeply grateful to Professor O'Neill for his wise counsels, constructive criticism, and constant support. We are also delighted that he has consented to remain on the executive committee.

F. G. C.

OUR NEW PRESIDENT: AN INTRODUCTION

Following Professor O'Neill's decision to lay down the office of President, the committee unanimously decided to invite Professor Frank Llewellyn-Jones to accept the post as his successor. We are honoured that so distinguished a physicist has so readily agreed to accept this invitation. From 1945 to 1955 Professor Llewellyn-Jones was Professor of Physics at the University College of Swansea, being appointed Principal in the latter year. He held the post until 1974 when he retired and was awarded the title of Professor Emeritus. He has published a number of books and articles in learned journals, mainly on ionization and discharge physics. Within the field of IA his particular interest is in railway history. He is currently engaged on research into the Penydarren Tramroad, the Taff Vale Railway and other railways in the Merthyr district.

P. R. R.

MERTHYR TYDFIL VISIT, MAY 1976

On 15th May members and friends were taken on a study tour of sites in the Merthyr Tydfil area by Mr W. E. Jenkins, Tutor in the Extra-Mural Department, University College of Swansea. The weather, which had at first threatened to bedevil proceedings as it had on our visit to Blaenafon last year, cleared up, and at our first stop at Cefn-Coed-y-Cymmer we were able to walk across the magnificent viaduct of 15 arches (built 1865-66) which once carried the railway from Pontsticill Junction to Merthyr.

We then moved on to Dowlais where we were met at St John's Church by the Rural Dean, the Revd. J. P. Owen, who talked to us about the church and some of its interesting 19th century records. We then visited the famous Dowlais stables, designed by Sir Charles Barry and erected in 1820 to house the horses used in the Dowlais works. The building is now, regrettably, threatened with demolition. Our society has no political axe to grind whatsoever, but we hope that the recently elected Plaid Cymru council at Merthyr will call a halt to the policy of insensible destruction of the evidence of Merthyr's historic past adopted by their predecessors.

After a brief visit to the site of the famous Dowlais works, of which little now remains, a long lunch break enabled us to explore central Merthyr at our leisure with the aid of notes provided by Mr Jenkins. After lunch, those with the energy left made the 30-minute walk past Chapel Row (where the composer Dr Joseph Parry was born) to Cyfarthfa Castle, built for the ironmaster William Crawshay in 1825. The castle is now a museum and a secondary school.

Before returning to Swansea we visited Wainor church to see the celebrated grave of Robert Thompson Crawshay ("God forgive me") and to Pontsticill to see the Taf Fochan reservoir (completed in 1927) and the now derelict, but still interesting remains of Pontsticill Junction station.

This tour, notable for the number, variety and interest of the sites and monuments visited, was admirably planned and expertly conducted. We are further indebted to our guide for the excellent set of notes he distributed before we left Swansea.

F. G. C.

NEATH GENERAL STATION

The long drawn-out affair of Neath station finally seems to be reaching its conclusion. It will be remembered that last February Neath Borough Planning Committee surprisingly voted to reject British Rail's application to demolish the existing station and to replace it with a modern one. A petition which attracted over 3000 signatures was organised locally in favour of the demolition of the station and in April BR once again submitted a planning application to the Council. On 27 April it was considered by the Planning Committee, and this time they voted 22 to 3 in favour of the building's demolition. Because of its status as a 'listed building' it was necessary for the Welsh Office to endorse the decision, and during May the Secretary of State decided, as on the previous occasion, that the matter should be left to Neath Borough Council. Consequently, when they met on 27 May to discuss the matter - the ninth time that it had come before them - they decided by 23 votes to 4 to allow BR to demolish the station, despite a last minute appeal from Mr Douglas Hague that they should act as "intelligent individual citizens, not as flabby rubber-stamped politicians". It really does look like the end this time. However, since BR have already said that they cannot now afford the £200,000 required, it is still not clear when the new station will finally be built.

The people of Neath seem to have had difficulties over their station before. In 1855, less than five years after the line was opened, dissatisfaction was being expressed, as the following paragraph from The Cambrian (26 January 1855) shows. The station in question was not, of course, the one about which there has been all the recent controversy, but the town's first station, which was on the site of the present down platform.

"NEATH STATION. The Directors of the South Wales Railway have commenced making some slight alterations at this long-neglected station, the greatest amount of traffic and the most inconvenient of stations on the South Wales line of railway being at Neath. The platform for the up London trains and down Merthyr has been considerably elongated, by which it is made much safer than it was before; but the place is still uncovered and the passengers are exposed to all weathers. Surely it is full time that some improvement and alteration for their comfort and convenience should take place."

P.R.R.

CONCRETE COTTAGES

Weaver's Flour Mill, completed in 1898, is described in our first 'Trail' booklet as "Britain's and perhaps Europe's first multi-storey reinforced concrete building". This note is about its humbler antecedents - the rather earlier buildings constructed of concrete, but without metal reinforcement. And from Weaver's the story in fact goes back to a Welsh woollen weaving district.

A church was built of concrete in Waldegrove Road, London SE 19 in 1883, but the earliest concrete buildings so far traced appear to be the two so-called 'concrete cottages' at Tregynon near Newtown, Powys. They were mentioned in a lecture delivered in Swansea in May last by Dr Glyn Tegai Hughes, Warden of Gregynog, Tregynon (the University of Wales conference centre). Dr Tegai Hughes later kindly lent a copy of The Concrete Quarterly for December 1972 which contains a well-illustrated article describing these cottages and mentioning other houses and the village school in Tregynon, which are also built, roofed and floored entirely of concrete, with various embellishments in the same material. The main arch and other parts of the attractive bridge (dated 1880) over the sunken lawns in front of Gregynog are likewise made of concrete. It is stated that the cottages 'sweated' for a long time after their construction, and this initial problem may account for the fact that this relatively cheap and effective system of building, introduced by Henry Hanbury-Tracey at Tregynon, did not spread to other areas - as was advocated by T. Nicholas in his County Families of Wales (vol.2, London, 1872).

R. O. Roberts

WIND STREET STATION, SWANSEA

If you stand outside the Royal Institution in Swansea and look across the busy dual carriageway, you will see a few remaining railway arches along the line of Little Wind Street. The arch nearest Wind Street is still used as business premises, but the last two standing at the Oystermouth Road end, and now supported by large timbers, seem to be the site of Wind Street station, the passenger terminus of the Swansea & Neath Railway. Windows reminiscent of a booking office, the stonework, and the use of a girder for a lintel, all agree with the description in The Cambrian for 17 July 1863, three days after the line was opened:

"One of the arches of the viaduct forms a very large and commodious booking-office, and the second arch two very comfortable waiting rooms. The arches are lined with galvanised iron, and they are so metamorphosed that none but those who know can tell what they were. The platform, which is of wood, built on to the viaduct, is 260 feet long, by 16 feet wide, and it is approached from the booking-office by a bold flight of stairs."

The narrow-gauge line from Neath was owned by the Vale of Neath company, itself then engaged in conversion from broad to mixed gauge. Swansea Corporation hoped that the new line would be linked with the Llanelli Railway's Dunvant Valley Extension, then in the course of construction, so forming a narrow-gauge route between Neath and Llanelli to supersede the main line of the South Wales Railway with its difficult gradients at Skewen and Cockett. A new general station would then be erected near the docks. A bill to this end did reach Parliament in 1866, but was rejected on Standing Orders. In the mean time, at a special Corporation meeting of 25 February 1863, the Company was leased the land for Wind Street Station for five years at 1/- p.a. There was little opposition: it was seen only as a temporary measure.

However, in 1865 the Great Western Railway took over the V.N.R., and the station was used for passenger services via Neath as far as Liverpool and Manchester. In 1867 the G.W.R.'s 4/- "People's Excursion" to Pontypool and Crumlyn departed from Wind Street. Charles Bath complained that at busy times the station steps were a scene of near chaos. The intensive use of the passenger station obstructed the passage of coal trains to the South Dock, and as early as October 1866 'A Sufferer' protested, in a letter to The Cambrian, over the slow turn around of the rolling stock of trains from Abercavon and Merthyr. When the lease had only six months to run George Burden Strick raised the matter at a Corporation meeting in June 1867, but at a meeting of the Harbour Trust in December 1871 John Jones Jenkins was still making protests.

Closure finally came on 1 March 1873, the year after the gauge conversion in South Wales had eliminated some of the disadvantages of the G.W.R. main line. By removing the passenger service the line was kept clear for coal traffic and the movement of trains to the South Dock was improved. This in turn meant that the bridges over the New Cut and North Dock were less liable to be blocked by stationary trains, and thus constrict shipping passing to and from the North Dock and wharves up-river. Passenger traffic between Neath and Swansea was confined to the main line via Landore until 1880 when a reduced local service was reinstated on the Swansea & Neath section with trains using a new terminus called East Dock on the far side of the River Tawe.

G. F. Gabb

(N.B. The arches described in this interesting article are likely to be demolished very shortly so you are advised to take any photographs you may want without delay. The recent excavations in this area by the Gwent Glamorgan Archaeological Trust have uncovered the foundations of one of the arches, which takes the form of a series of steps of increasing size. Ed.)

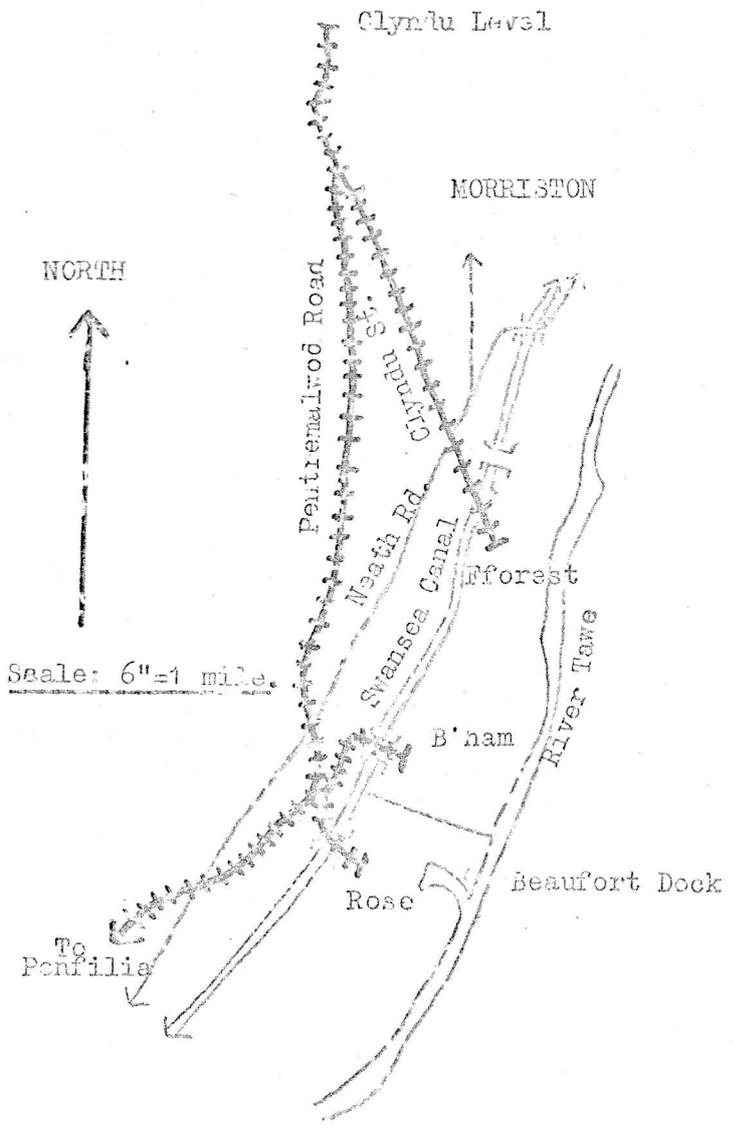
CLYNDU AND PENTREMAIWDOD TRAMROADS, MORRISTON

Clyndu Street, Morriston, is strikingly straight and runs down the western flank of the Swansea Valley at a regular gradient. This is not surprising since it owes its origins to an early waggonway by which coal was brought down from levels on the side of the valley.

It was in about 1746 that the copper-smelting firm of Lockwood, Morris & Co. moved from their Llangyvelach Works at Landore to a new site near what is now Morriston. Here they established the Forest Copperworks. On behalf of the company Robert Morris leased coal under Graig Trewyddfa from the Duke of Beaufort. Clyndu Level was one of the first levels by which this coal was extracted. It is known to have been in production in 1754 when it is recorded that six men lost their lives through 'choke' (i.e. carbonic acid gas). (NIM Wales 4/616/6). A waggonway, now Clyndu Street, was built and it ran in a straight line from the mouth of the level to the copperworks. The first definite reference we have to it is on a map drawn in 1761 from a survey made a few years previously. There it is described as "the road where Mr Morris' carts bring down the coal to the Copper Works". It is nowhere specifically stated that Clyndu Street was in fact a waggonway with wooden rails to guide the waggons, and there is therefore just a possibility that it might have been an ordinary road for carts. However this seems unlikely. In Shropshire at this period it was common practice for coal to be brought down the sides of the valley to the River Severn, the waggonway often running in a continuous line from the coal-face to the shipping place. Robert Morris came from Shropshire and was in touch with the most up-to-date industrial methods. It would in fact be surprising, in view of this, if he did not lay down a wooden waggonway for his coal traffic.

Robert Morris died in 1768 and was succeeded by his son, John. John Morris decided in 1776 to lay down cast-iron tram-plates (i.e. rails) in his collieries. The rails were cast at Coalbrookdale and proved a definite success. By 1788 there were nearly 3 3/4 miles of underground railway at Landore Colliery alone. Clyndu is not mentioned at all in this context, but since the rails were so successful at Landore it is not unlikely that they were introduced here as well during the 1780s.

In 1793 Morris, Lockwood & Co. moved from the Forest back to Landore, and the Forest Works were taken over by Harford & Co's brass wire works. In 1800 John Morris withdrew from the company which became simply Lockwood & Co., and in 1806 Lockwood, on his own behalf, bought a third share in the collieries owned by the firm of Lockwood & Co. He then formed a new company, known as the Penfilia Vein Co. to exploit the collieries at Penfilia, Treboeth and Clyndu. As a result of these developments the original purpose of the Clyndu Waggonway no longer applied. The interest of the new owners of the level was to sell the coal by way of trade, and it was therefore necessary for them to get it to the Swansea Canal, the best available means of transport.



The Clyndu Waggonway fell out of use as such, becoming just an ordinary road, and its function was taken over by a new tramroad on an alignment a little to the west which is now Pentremalwod Road. This new tramroad brought down coal from Clyndu Level and Hen Lefely Graig, a little higher up, to a wharf on the canal. Here it was joined by another tramroad from the south-west which ran along what is now Dinas Street by which coal was transported from the other collieries of the Fenvilia Vein Co. The two branches joined on the western bank of the canal opposite the Rose Copperworks and crossed the canal by a bridge to deliver coal to the copperworks and possibly, too, to the Beaufort Dock for shipping on the river. The 1830 1" O.S. map also shows a spur joining the road that gave access to the Birmingham Copperworks.

Some time during the 1830s the Clyndu Level became the property of John Glastbrook, founder of a dynasty of Swansea coalowners whose principal seat of operations was subsequently in the Fforestfach area. The level was closed in 1841 by which time its workings extended underground as far as Morryston Cemetery. As a result of this the Pentremalwod Tramroad was abandoned, and, like the Clyndu Waggonway, it became an ordinary road. The tramroad to Penfilia along Dinas Street was still in existence in about 1850 (NLW Badminton, Group 2, no. 1284), but by 1876, when the first edition of the 6" O.S. map was surveyed, it too had been abandoned.

P.R.R.

DATED STREET IRONWORK

In the older parts of any town or city examples abound of iron manhole covers, railings, coal-hole doors etc. with the name of a local foundry where they were cast, and, very often, the date of casting. A study of these pieces of street furniture helps to establish the dates when the different foundries were in operation. Two examples have been reported in Swansea by R.O. Roberts:

1. Hanover Street, Swansea. Metal cover of a water gully crossing the pavement inscribed "John Brown, The Paddocks, Swansea. 1891".
2. Overland Road, Mumbles. 100 yds. from the top of Vicarage Lane the iron door of a coal cellar reads "T.W. Williams, Wellington Foundry, Swansea, 1886".

Please report any more examples you know about with a view to our publishing a longer list in a future Newsletter.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

"On Tuesday afternoon" (i.e. 22 August 1876) "a capital specimen of iron-shipbuilding was launched from the Neath Abbey Ironworks Yard in the presence of a large number of spectators. The vessel has been specially designed for speed as well as for comfort, her light draught of water being also one of her principal features. The best Welsh iron has been used in her construction, and her keel is hammered throughout. Her lines were taken from the model of Mr John D. Lewis, the shipwright of the company, and she has been classed A1 at Lloyd's for 100 years, having been constructed under the personal supervision of Lloyd's surveyor. The engines will be of great power, the boilers being multitubular. The ceremony of naming the vessel was performed by Miss Sarah Ann Jones, youngest daughter of Mr Henry Jones, the managing partner of the firm. A ringing cheer as the bottle struck the bows of the vessel and the Flying Scud glided into the water, announced the success of the proceedings. The whole of the employes were subsequently invited to a liberal "footing" refreshment table at the Abbey hostelry. At the conclusion of the ceremony a banquet was laid at the Abbey Dock Hotel. Mr Edward Davies, in the unavoidable absence of the mayor of Neath (whose efforts to carry out the floating harbour scheme are well known) occupied the chair. Captain Rosser, the owner of the vessel, presided as vice-chairman and during the evening success to Captain Rosser Rosser of Swansea and the Flying Scud was enthusiastically drunk, to which Captain Rosser replied in appropriate terms."

(The Cambrian, 25 August 1876.)

RECENT LITERATURE

MERTHYR TYDFIL HISTORICAL SOCIETY. Merthyr Historian.

This illustrated paperback contains 14 shortish chapters on the history of Merthyr by members of the society or visiting speakers who have addressed them. They fall into three groups, viz., the iron industry, transport and social history. The subject matter of some of the chapters overlap one another or duplicate existing work, but despite this the book is well worth having.

(Mr J. Cross, President M.T.H.S., Yr Hafod, Heol-y-Mynydd, Ccain Codd, Merthyr Tydfil. £1-50 + 20p postage.)

SOUTH EAST WALES INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY. Journal, vol.2, no.2

Our colleagues in Cardiff are to be congratulated on the latest issue of their journal. In over 100 large pages there are ten articles, all of interest but some of more particular relevance to our side of the coalfield. J.G. Owen describes a locomotive built at Neath Abbey for the Rhymney Iron Co. in 1866, Raymond Bowen writes on the history of the Llanelly & Mynydd Mawr Railway, and Henry John outlines the history of the Maesteg iron industry. In addition there are articles on collieries, canal boats and other antiquities, tramroads and public health in Merthyr in the last century.

(W.G. Hughes, Hon. Secretary SEWIAS, 96 Wenallt Road, Rhiwbina, Cardiff. £1-00 + 2p postage.)

John VAN LAUN. The pattern of past industry in the National Park.

This very attractive little booklet forms an ideal companion for the EI enthusiast visiting the Brecon Beacons. One hopes that it will also be the means of introducing visitors to some of the interesting industrial remains that they might otherwise overlook. 86 different sites are described, each is given its map reference, and a double-page map in the centre shows the location of each one. Scattered throughout the text are a number of line drawings including Hirwaun Ironworks and Craig-y-Nos station. Design and production are both of a high order while on the other hand the price is encouragingly low. Definitely recommended.

(National Park Officer, Glamorgan Street, Brecon, Powys. 20p + 9p postage.)

W. Gerwyn THOMAS. Welsh coal mines.

This attractive booklet by an acknowledged expert consists of illustrations of 59 different collieries with full and informative captions to each one. Most of the collieries are in South Wales, but a few have been included from the North Wales coalfield in Clwyd. All aspects of the subject are covered - operations at the face, surface buildings and machinery, transport, disasters, and the men themselves.

(National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. 45p.)

Susan CAMPBELL-JONES. Welsh sail.

After a short introduction outlining the history of sail, this book consists of a selection of old photographs of sailing ships in Welsh waters with an accompanying text. The quality of reproduction is high and the text informative.

(Gomer Press, Llandyssul, Dyfed. £1-50.)

Lewis BRAITHWAITE. Canals in towns.

Although containing nothing on this area, no doubt the real canal buff will find this an interesting piece of work.

(Adam & Charles Black, London. £4-75.)